United Nations E/ICEF/2018/15

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
12 April 2018

Original: English

For decision

United Nations Children's Fund
Executive Board
Annual session 2018
11–14 June 2018
Item 8 of the provisional agenda*

Annual report for 2017 on the evaluation function in UNICEF

Summary

The present report provides an overview of the UNICEF evaluation function in 2017. It outlines progress in providing the necessary evaluation evidence for organizational learning and accountability achieved under the revised evaluation policy of UNICEF (E/ICEF/2013/14) and during the period of implementation of the Strategic Plan, 2014–2017. The report also provides an update on the governance of the evaluation function and its contribution to system-wide coherence in evaluation. It presents a detailed analysis of the performance of the evaluation function at all levels of the organization, and includes a synopsis of the key findings of several corporate evaluations.

Elements of a decision for consideration by the Executive Board are provided in section VIII.

* E/ICEF/2018/8.

18-05865 (E) 010518

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I. Introduction

1. Profound changes in the environment in which UNICEF operates continue to shape the organization's work, requiring it to learn, adapt and improve continuously. These changes are placing ever-greater demands on accountability mechanisms for delivering better results. The Secretary-General has repeatedly emphasized the crucial importance of evaluation, calling for specific measures to strengthen evaluation both within United Nations entities and across the entire system. In April 2016, the Secretary-General highlighted the need for an independent and fully transparent culture of evaluation, and urged the system to make greater use of real-time evaluations. In his December 2017 report on repositioning the United Nations development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda: our promise for dignity, prosperity and peace on a healthy planet (A/72/684–E/2018/7), the Secretary-General further committed to strengthening system-wide evaluation. These and other global developments informed the direction that the UNICEF evaluation function pursued in 2017.

2. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the 2016 quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (QCPR; General Assembly resolution 71/243) and the priorities identified for the last year of the organization's Strategic Plan, 2014–2017 have specific implications for the generation of evidence on what works in pursuit of the global goals, including the need to strengthen national evaluation capacity. In addition, the scale and complexity of humanitarian crises require the organization to generate more systematic and timely evidence on what works best for children and their families in such contexts.

3. The present report provides an overview of progress, achievements and challenges relative to the UNICEF evaluation function as it responded to these demands in 2017. It covers the governance of the evaluation function and its contribution to system-wide coherence and summarizes the performance of the function in relation to the Strategic Plan, 2014–2017 targets for evaluation, the revised evaluation policy (E/ICEF/2013/14) and the plan for global thematic evaluations 2014–2017. The report provides summary updates on the implementation of the management response to the Development Assistance Committee (DAC)-United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) peer review of the evaluation function of UNICEF (2017). It also highlights key findings and lessons learned from corporate evaluations.

II. Governance of the evaluation function

4. Evaluation in UNICEF is aimed at fostering learning about what works best in achieving results for children and providing the evidence necessary to strengthen performance management and accountability. Evaluations are carried out at all levels of the organization, with the majority taking place at the country level. The Evaluation Office will more systematically engage with country and regional offices to share key lessons emanating from evaluations.

5. In accordance with the UNICEF evaluation policy, the governance of the function in 2017 involved several actors. The Executive Board continued to oversee the organization's work, providing direction to the evaluation function and using evaluation findings to strengthen accountability. The Executive Director continued to promote a culture of accountability, learning and continuous improvement and to allocate human and financial resources to the function.

6. The Evaluation Office continued to oversee the function, including: (a) preparing and leading the implementation of the evaluation policy, which sets standards for evaluations; (b) providing technical guidance and quality assurance to headquarters divisions and regional and country offices; and (c) fostering partnerships, knowledge management and capacity development, with the ultimate aim of promoting learning and continuous improvement in the organization. The Evaluation Office also commissioned and managed corporate evaluations in support of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2014–2017 and other global policies and strategies. Those evaluations are identified in the global plan for thematic evaluations 2014–2017. Corporate evaluations completed or initiated in 2017 are discussed in section V of the report.

7. The external Audit Advisory Committee was expanded in 2017 to include a global expert in evaluation, allowing the committee to further strengthen its oversight of the evaluation function, including ensuring adherence to the norms and standards set out in the evaluation policy.

8. In addition, pursuant to one of the recommendations of the DAC-UNEG peer review, the external Evaluation Advisory Panel, made up of external experts who provide independent advice to the Director of Evaluation, was constituted in late 2017 and met for the first time in January 2018; it will convene twice per year. Serving for a period of three years, the experts represent diverse geographical areas and institutional backgrounds. The panel's duties include advising the Director on policy matters, such as the preparation and roll-out of the revised evaluation policy and the plan for global evaluations; recommending improvements to evaluation methodologies, procedures, quality-assurance mechanisms and management responses; and suggesting innovative ways to improve the conduct and use of evaluations, including improvements to knowledge-sharing and dissemination.

9. The Global Evaluation Committee, an internal body that advises senior management on the relevance and use of evaluations, was particularly instrumental in creating and sustaining the demand for evaluations in 2017. The committee met several times to assess progress in the implementation of management responses, paying particular attention to the recommendations of the peer review. The Evaluation Office also consulted the committee in the formulation of the plan for global evaluations, 2018–2021 and the new revision of the evaluation policy.

10. Divisional and regional directors and regional evaluation advisers, together with country representatives and specialists, continued to generate vital evidence and facilitate its use, in line with the norms and standards of UNEG. The Director of Evaluation worked with regional directors to begin the process of recruiting two of three new regional evaluation advisers, in accordance with the management response to the peer review report and provisions in the integrated budget, 2018–2021. The recruitment of the new advisers is expected to be completed by June 2018.

11. The UNICEF global evaluation network convened evaluation staff and key partners, including UNEG, in late 2017 to discuss new ways of strengthening collaboration across all levels of the organization. The network also developed plans for improving the evaluation function in 2018, including strengthening the capacity of staff and methodologies to enhance the quality and timeliness of evaluations; enhancing mechanisms to promote the use of evaluation; and developing measures to expand partnerships for national evaluation capacity development.

III. Promoting evaluation coherence within the United Nations

A. Independent system-wide evaluation of United Nations operational activities for development

12. The need for credible, independent, system-wide evaluation has been a recurrent theme since 2004 (General Assembly resolution 59/250). In the 2012 QCPR (resolution 67/226), the General Assembly provided for the establishment of an independent system-wide evaluation mechanism and reiterated in the 2016 QCPR its call for such a mechanism, specifically underscoring the importance of strengthening a high-quality, independent and impartial system-wide evaluation mechanism of operational activities for development that enhances coherence and interdependence in the overall evaluation architecture of the United Nations development system, using its findings and recommendations to improve the functioning of the system.

13. The Secretary-General, in his July 2017 report to the Economic and Social Council on repositioning the United Nations development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda: ensuring a better future for all (A/72/124–E/2018/3), proposed creating capacities for the independent evaluation of system-wide activities. In his December 2017 report, the Secretary-General put forward various measures to strengthen system-wide evaluation at the global and country levels, including the establishment of an independent office focused on strategic, cross-cutting issues relating to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The new office would commission independent system-wide evaluations on strategic development issues, while supporting entities at the country level to undertake joint evaluations on system-wide efforts to advance the implementation of the Goals and strengthening the quality of evaluations within the existing evaluation architecture, including evaluations of United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAF).

14. Following the Secretary-General's proposals, the Evaluation Office has been working with UNEG to support coordination arrangements for system-wide evaluations to be established by Member States at the global, regional and country levels. UNICEF is also engaged in joint evaluations with other United Nations agencies, recognizing the benefits of promoting learning and shared accountability and of reducing transaction costs, with priority to joint evaluations of UNDAFs and joint programmes. UNICEF has also commenced arrangements with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) to jointly evaluate the common chapter in their strategic plans.

B. United Nations Evaluation Group

15. UNEG remains a key mechanism for enhancing the coherence of the United Nations evaluation community, involving United Nations departments, specialized agencies, funds and programmes and affiliated organizations. The Director of Evaluation served as one of four UNEG Vice-Chairs, with responsibility for strengthening partnerships, from May 2014 to May 2017, and was involved in the development of the UNEG partnership strategy. UNICEF evaluation staff also participate in all UNEG task forces, including those on the Sustainable Development Goals, partnerships, professionalization, humanitarian work and evaluation use. Currently, UNICEF is co-managing, together with the International Trade Centre, the midterm review of the UNEG strategy. The UNICEF Evaluation Office also supported advocacy by UNEG around evaluation efforts, particularly through the organization

of a side meeting during the 2017 high-level political forum on sustainable development.

C. Inter-agency Humanitarian Evaluation steering group and other humanitarian networks

16. The Evaluation Office is a member of the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation (IAHE) steering group, which is composed of evaluation directors from several United Nations agencies, non-governmental consortiums and the International Committee of the Red Cross. The steering group coordinates and develops broad strategic guidance and methodological approaches for IAHEs, producing a prioritized list of IAHEs to be conducted, managing them through an IAHE management group and ensuring that they are disseminated and used.

17. The IAHE steering group did not conduct an evaluation in 2017 due to an escalation of the conflict in the intended country (Iraq). A new workplan was subsequently put forward on joint evaluations planned for 2018. Despite constraints in executing the IHAE workplans, UNICEF has stepped up the evaluation of its own performance in humanitarian situations. At least one corporate evaluation and three evaluations of the UNICEF level-3 responses are anticipated in 2018.

18. Furthermore, in 2017, the UNICEF Evaluation Office continued to support the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP), which is particularly valuable for its links to decision-makers and its state-of-the-art innovations in the humanitarian field. The Evaluation Office regularly shares the latest ALNAP developments throughout the organization to promote learning. UNICEF facilitates networking opportunities for national partners, and works to increase the profile of evaluation within the broad range of ALNAP priorities. It also contributes to the network by sharing its own evaluation findings. For example, the Evaluation Office presented findings from evaluations on humanitarian performance monitoring and the Ebola crisis at the 2017 ALNAP annual review meeting. In addition, the Evaluation Office facilitated the use by country offices of the ALNAP Evaluation of Humanitarian Action Guide, which was developed to help humanitarian actors increase the quality and usefulness of evaluation findings and programme results.

IV. Promoting evaluation capacity development globally

Networks for national evaluation capacity development

19. UNICEF continued to contribute to inter-agency efforts and global partnerships for national evaluation capacity development in line with the 2013 UNICEF revised evaluation policy, the 2016 QCPR and General Assembly resolution 69/237.

20. UNICEF also played a significant role in organizing the third Global Evaluation Forum, entitled "Transforming our world through evaluation: engagement and partnerships for the better world we want", held in April in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. The event culminated in the endorsement of a partnership statement in which government representatives and parliamentarians, civil society and United Nations organizations and international donors renewed their commitment to more effective national evaluation capacity development.

21. In 2017, UNICEF continued to co-lead, together with the International Organization for Cooperation in Evaluation, EVALSDGs, a global network that promotes evaluation activities around the Sustainable Development Goals, including

review and follow-up processes. The Evaluation Office remains an active member of the EvalPartners Management Group and of the Global Parliamentarians Forum for Evaluation.

22. In response to a peer-review recommendation that UNICEF develop a new strategy of national evaluation capacity development to further advance the organization's work in that area, the Evaluation Office mapped the key relevant initiatives that UNICEF supports. This mapping exercise will guide the development of a corporate strategy clarifying roles and the value added of UNICEF engagement in national evaluation capacity development. It has also generated valuable insights that will enable UNICEF and other United Nations agencies to more effectively support national efforts to develop evaluation capacity. Digital tools are being developed to improve coordination among agencies (see figure I).

Figure I

Example of mapping tool for UNICEF support to national evaluation capacity development

PAK-01
Developing Subnational Evaluation Policies
Sub-national
ROSA
Punjab and Baluchistan provinces, Pakistan
Research and Evaluation Unit, PMER, UNICEF Pakistan
Pakistan - Punjab and Baluchistan provinces
Government of Punjab and Government of Baluchistan
Planning and Development Department
to formulate strategic policy guidance on role, function and quality standards of evaluations within public sector for all development work at provincial level
2014
2018

V. Performance of the evaluation function

23. The analysis in section V focuses on performance indicators for the UNICEF evaluation function contained in the Strategic Plan, 2014–2017 as well as additional indicators used to monitor how evaluation accountabilities were discharged in accordance with the 2013 revised evaluation policy and the plan for global thematic evaluations, 2014–2017. The indicators cover the following:

(a) Evaluations submitted;

(b) Geographical coverage of evaluations;

(c) Thematic distribution of evaluations;

(d) Types of evaluations conducted;

(e) Quality of evaluations

(f) Use of evaluations:

(i) Submission of management responses;

(ii) Implementation of management response actions;

(g) Spending on evaluation;

(h) Production of corporate evaluations.

24. The data presented draw from several sources, including:

(a) The internal evaluation management information system managed by the Evaluation Office, including the Evaluation and Research Database and the Evaluation Management Response Tracking System;

(b) The independent Global Evaluation Reports Oversight System (GEROS), a quality assessment system managed by the Innovation, Information, Learning and Uptake Unit of UNICEF, with evaluation quality assessments carried out by the independent firm Impact Ready.

25. In addition, each year, Impact Ready produces a global meta-analysis of all evaluations submitted the previous year.[1]

A. Performance under the Strategic Plan, 2014–2017 indicators on evaluation

26. Overall, the evaluation function achieved or exceeded the targets of the Strategic Plan, 2014–2017 for the evaluation function (see table 1).

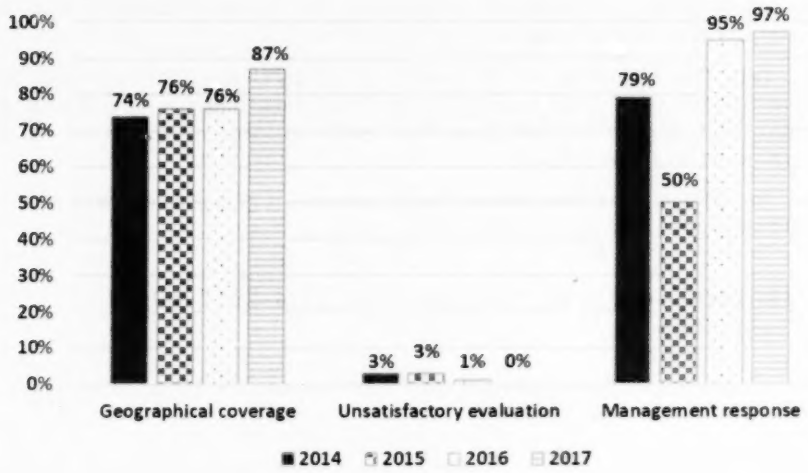
Table 1
Overall trends in indicators of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2014–2017 for the evaluation function

(percentage)

Strategic Plan indicator	*Baseline (2013)*	*Result*				*Target*		
		2014	*2015*	*2016*	***2017***	*2015*	*2016*	***2017***
Geographical coverage Offices that submitted at least one completed evaluation to the Evaluation and Research Database in the previous three years	75	74	76	76	**87**	75	78	**80**
Quality of evaluations Evaluations rated "unsatisfactory" on the basis of United Nations standards	2	3	3	1	**0**	3	3	**< 3**
Management responses submitted Evaluations submitted with a formal management response	92	79	50	95	**97**	92	92	**92**
Management responses completed Agreed evaluation recommendations completed, as recorded in the Evaluation Management Response Tracking System	36	27	20	33	**46**	30	32	**35**
Management response implementation Evaluation recommendations in the implementation stage, as recorded in the Management Response Tracking System	45	49	44	43	**36**	52	55	**60**

[1] Available from www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index_96629.html.

Figure II
Trends in three key performance indicators, 2014–2017



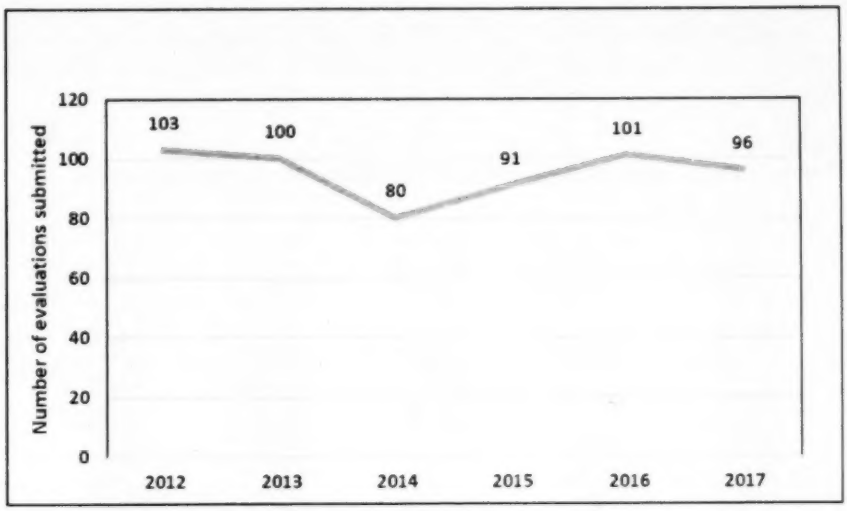
Source: Global Evaluation Reports Oversight System (GEROS).

B. Performance under key performance indicators derived from the revised evaluation policy and plan for global thematic evaluations, 2014–2017

Evaluation submission

27. "Evaluations submitted" is defined as the number of evaluations submitted to the Evaluation and Research Database by offices at all levels of the organization. In 2017, 96 evaluative products (89 evaluations, three synthesis evaluations, two reviews and two evaluability assessments) were submitted, a decrease from 101 in 2016. The pattern of the decrease in 2017 is consistent with that of the organizational spending on evaluations for the same year. Spending on evaluations is discussed in section V.

Figure III
Trends in evaluation submissions, 2012–2017



Source: UNICEF Evaluation and Research Database.

28. The number of evaluations submitted varies by region: Europe and Central Asia (ECAR), Eastern and Southern Africa (ESAR), Latin America and Caribbean (LACR) and West and Central Africa (WCAR) each submitted 13 or more evaluations. East Asia and the Pacific (EAPR) submitted eight evaluations, while the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and South Asia (SA) each submitted seven evaluations. It should be noted, however, that SA, which covers highly populous countries, has fewer offices than the other regions.

Table 2
Regional evaluation submission rates, 2012–2017

Year	*EAPR*	*ECAR*	*ESAR*	*HQ*	*LACR*	*MENA*	*SA*	*WCAR*
2012	8	15	28	13	6	5	8	20
2013	8	13	19	6	15	8	4	27
2014	6	15	13	8	8	4	14	12
2015	14	14	17	4	7	8	12	15
2016	11	9	26	10	13	6	13	13
2017	8	16	15	13	13	7	7	17

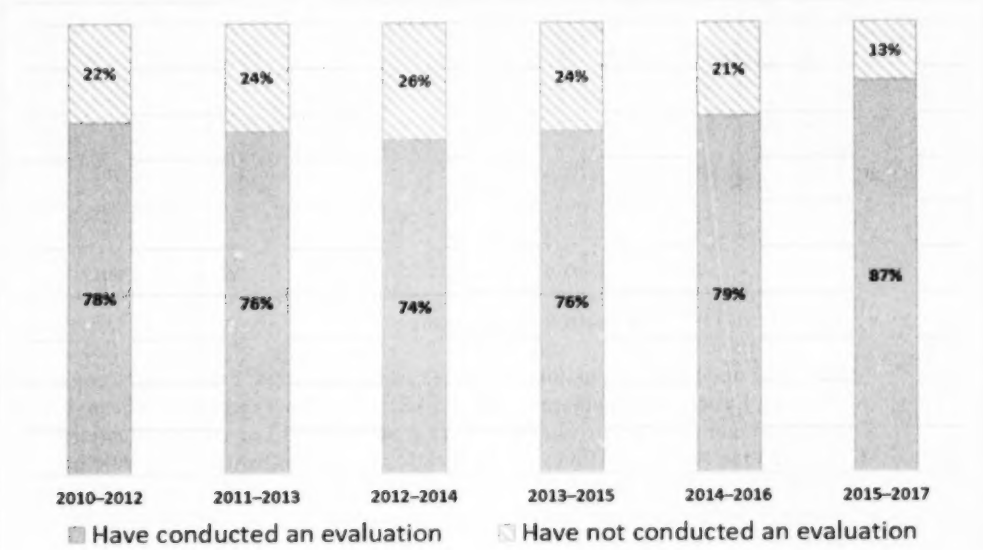
Abbreviations: East Asia and the Pacific (EAPR), Eastern Europe and Central Asia (ECAR), Eastern and Southern Africa (ESAR), HQ (headquarters), Latin America and Caribbean (LACR), Middle East and North Africa (MENA), South Asia (SA) and West and Central Africa (WCAR).
Source: UNICEF Evaluation and Research Database.

29. In 2018, the Evaluation Office will launch a new integrated database system to provide real-time information on the implementation of evaluation plans so that offices showing slow progress towards targeted evaluations can be promptly supported.

Geographical coverage of evaluations

30. "Geographical coverage" is defined as the proportion of country offices that submitted at least one evaluation report in the past three years. Performance related to geographical coverage improved from 79 per cent of country offices conducting evaluations for the period 2014–2016 to 87 per cent for the period 2015–2017 (see figure IV).

Figure IV
Trends in the geographical coverage of evaluation, 2010–2017, all regions



Source: Global Evaluation Reports Oversight System (GEROS).

31. The increase in the geographical coverage of evaluations across regions since 2013 is noteworthy. Coverage for the period 2015–2017 shows an improvement across all regions except SA. ECAR and ESAR recorded very high coverage rates, at 91 per cent each, while four regions (EAPR, LACR, MENA and WCAR) were above 80 per cent.

Table 3
Trends in the geographical coverage of evaluation, by region, 2013–2017
(percentage)

Year	*EAPR*	*ECAR*	*ESAR*	*LACR*	*MENA*	*SA*	*WCAR*
2013–2015	73	82	95	56	65	100	76
2014–2016	87	86	82	64	65	100	76
2015–2017	87	91	91	84	82	89	87

Abbreviations: East Asia and the Pacific (EAPR), Eastern Europe and Central Asia (ECAR), Eastern and Southern Africa (ESAR), Latin America and Caribbean (LACR), Middle East and North Africa (MENA), South Asia (SA) and West and Central Africa (WCAR).
Source: GEROS.

32. To improve geographical coverage, offices with limited capacity and budgets to conduct evaluations are being supported to participate in multi-country evaluations managed by regional offices. Moreover, the revision to the evaluation policy currently under way will provide more detailed criteria and clearer time frames for conducting evaluations, further increasing coverage.

Thematic distribution of evaluations

33. The thematic distribution of evaluations is assessed through an analysis of the distribution of evaluations by Strategic Plan, 2014–2017 outcome area and cross-cutting theme. To this end, UNICEF commissions annually a meta-analysis of evaluations submitted the previous year.

34. An analysis of the 101 evaluation reports submitted in 2016 showed a balanced topical distribution of evaluations (see table 4): child survival (comprising health, HIV/AIDS, nutrition and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)); education; and child protection were the subject of 32 per cent, 13 per cent and 16 per cent of the evaluation portfolio, respectively.[2] In recent years, a significant proportion of evaluations have covered cross-cutting themes, especially gender equality, humanitarian action and social inclusion.

35. The focus on gender equality is notable. A detailed analysis of the Evaluation and Research Database shows that 48 per cent of evaluations covered gender equality as a cross-cutting theme. The newly revised evaluation policy is aimed at ensuring the mainstreaming of gender equality in all evaluations.

36. Humanitarian action is also an important cross-cutting issue in the Strategic Plan, 2014–2017. While one evaluation focused specifically on humanitarian issues, an analysis of the database reveals that 28 percent of evaluations covered humanitarian action as a cross-cutting theme. Given the contexts in which many children live, the new evaluation policy is aimed at increasing evaluation of the various levels of the UNICEF humanitarian response.

37. Evaluations that successfully mainstreamed gender equality as a cross-cutting theme were also strongest in terms of human rights-based approaches, while evaluations that covered humanitarian action as a cross-cutting theme were strongest in terms of evaluation purpose.

Table 4
Thematic distribution of evaluations, 2014–2016[3]
(percentage)

Topic	*2014*	*2015*	*2016*
Sector-specific evaluations, by key results area of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2014–2017			
Child survival and development	23	22	32
Health	13	15	14
Nutrition	0	1	10
Water, sanitation and hygiene	10	6	8
Education	32	28	13
Child protection	6	25	16
HIV/AIDS	4	7	6

[2] 2016 Global Evaluation Reports Oversight System meta-analysis.
[3] Analysis of thematic distribution for 2017 evaluations will be finalized in mid-2018.

Topic	*2014*	*2015*	*2016*
Social inclusion	1	2	12
Total sector-specific evaluations	**66**	**84**	**79**
Other evaluations (cross-cutting, organizational performance)	**34**	**16**	**21**

Source: GEROS.

Type and purpose of evaluations conducted

38. The GEROS meta-analysis further shows that 91 per cent of evaluations were at the outcome and impact levels. Only 6 per cent of evaluations focused on the output level. The focus on outcome and impact levels demonstrates an appropriate use of evaluation to better understand the organization's contributions to results for children.

39. Regarding the purpose of the evaluations, there was a balanced distribution across summative, formative and mixed purposes, albeit with a slight predominance of formative evaluations. A total of 72 per cent of evaluations were either formative or mixed purpose.

40. For the period under review, 85 per cent of reports submitted were managed directly by UNICEF offices. Ten percent of evaluations were managed jointly with other United Nations agencies, Governments and funding partners.[4]

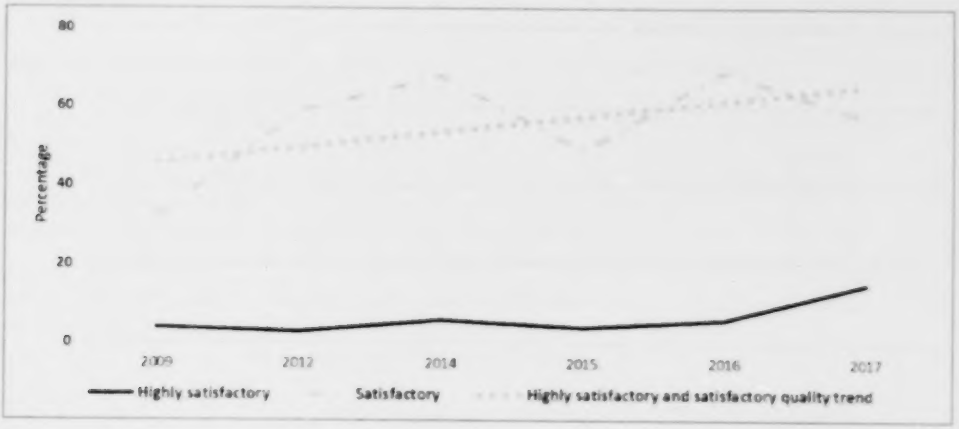
Quality of UNICEF evaluations

41. The Evaluation Office has supported the entire function to improve the percentage of reports rated "highly satisfactory" and "satisfactory" and thus meeting United Nations standards and norms. The percentage of evaluations rated "highly satisfactory" increased significantly, from 6 per cent in 2016 to 14.8 per cent in 2017, while the percentage rated "satisfactory" fell from 69 percent in 2016 to 56.8 percent in 2017. Evaluations rated "fair" decreased from 36 per cent in 2016 to 28.4 per cent in 2017. There were no "unsatisfactory" reports in 2017.

42. A graphic representation of these ratings (see figure V) reveals an upward trend in quality improvement over the years, and it is anticipated that this trajectory will continue. The Evaluation Office will continue to provide support at all levels to ensure that quality is maintained.

[4] The management of 5 per cent of the evaluation portfolio falls under other arrangements.

Figure V
Trend in quality of evaluations, 2009–2017: satisfactory and highly-satisfactory ratings



Source: GEROS.

43. Evaluations were also assessed in terms of quality by type of evaluation. Overall, 68.3 per cent of the impact- and outcome-level evaluations were rated "highly satisfactory" or "satisfactory" (see table 5).

Table 5
Evaluation focus and quality, 2016

	Number of evaluations				
Focus	*Highly satisfactory*	*Satisfactory*	*Fair*	*Unsatisfactory*	***Total***
Impact	3	29	9	0	**41**
Outcome	3	34	12	1	**50**
Output	0	3	3	0	**6**

Note: The evaluation focus of 4 of the 101 evaluation reports assessed through GEROS could not be determined. Therefore, those reports are not included in the table.
Source: GEROS.

United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

44. UNICEF also monitors and reports on its evaluation performance against key indicators set out in the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. For evaluations submitted in 2016, the aggregated average score for UNICEF was 6.2, which is classified as "approaching requirements". This represents a year-on-year improvement, with UNICEF having reported a rating of 6 in the previous cycle. The rating is also consistent with that of similar United Nations entities.

45. Evaluations in 2016 were slightly stronger in integrating gender than was the case in 2015. UNICEF remains committed to improving its performance under the Action Plan, the aim of which is to ensure that gender analysis is used to inform evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations. The Evaluation Office will

make use of evaluations from MENA and SA as good practice in this regard, as ratings from those regions are significantly above the average for the Action Plan overall.

Use of evaluation, including management responses

Submission of management responses

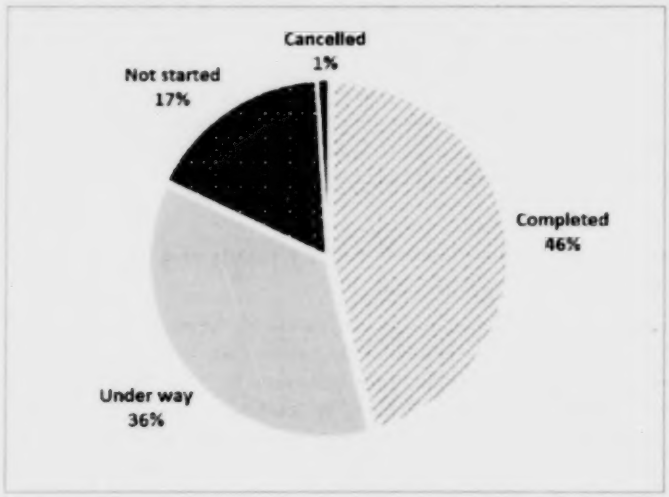
46. Management response is a key feature of the evaluation cycle. In its decision 2016/7, the Executive Board urged UNICEF to prioritize the timely delivery of management responses and to improve the rate of implementation of agreed evaluation recommendations. In its decision 2018/2, the Board requested UNICEF to present a formal management response with each evaluation report setting out actions and a timetable for implementation. In response, UNICEF has acted, in line with the evaluation policy, to ensure that all evaluation reports uploaded onto the Evaluation and Research Database are accompanied by a formal management response.

47. Consequently, the Evaluation Management Response Tracking System shows that 3 per cent of all evaluations submitted in the previous year lack a management response, an improvement from 5 per cent the previous year.

Implementation of management response actions

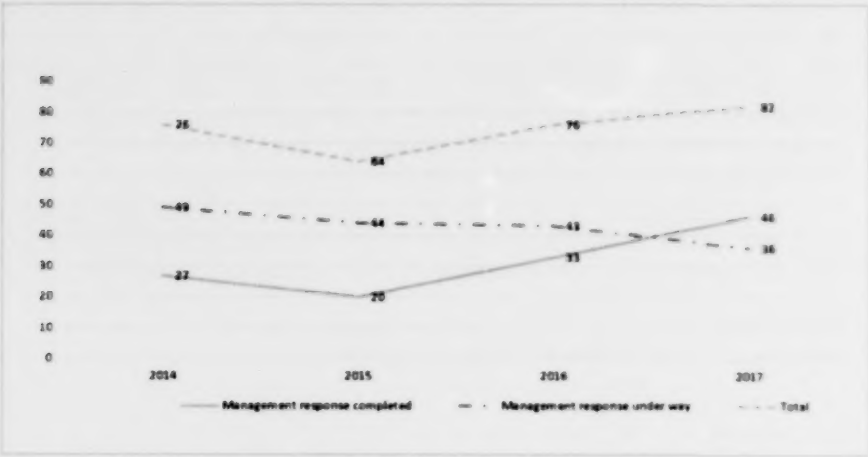
48. To ensure that evaluation recommendations are acted upon, management response actions are to be completed within one year. In 2017, 82 per cent of actions listed in the management responses to evaluations conducted in 2016 had been initiated (46 per cent completed and 36 per cent under way), while 17 per cent of the actions had yet to be initiated (see figure VI). This represents an improvement from 2015, when 76 per cent of the agreed actions set out in management responses had been completed (33 per cent) or were under way (43 per cent) at the end of 2016 (see figure VII).

Figure VI
Implementation of management response actions, 2017



Source: Evaluation Management Response Tracking System.

Figure VII
Trends in the implementation of evaluation management responses, 2014–2017
(percentage)



Source: Evaluation Management Response Tracking System

49. Further analysis shows variations across regions at the end of 2016: LACR, EAPR, SA, ECAR, and MENA showed good progress, with 91 per cent, 88 per cent, 86 per cent, 83 per cent and 80 per cent of their actions completed or under way, respectively. ESAR and WCAR also made progress, with 78 per cent and 74 per cent of actions under way or completed, respectively (see table 6). The Evaluation Office will continue to encourage offices to implement their management responses on time, and will regularly monitor the situation through the Evaluation Management Response Tracking System. To this end, new evaluation management response guidance will be issued in 2018, together with an improved system to enable the closer tracking of management response implementation.

Table 6
Management response implementation, 2016
(percentage)

	Action status			
Region	*Completed*	*Under way*	*Not started*	*Cancelled*
EAPR	68	20	11	1
ECAR	50	33	17	0
ESAR	45	33	22	0
HQ	18	70	12	0
LACR	53	38	7	2
MENA	59	21	20	0
SA	53	33	14	0
WCAR	41	33	25	1

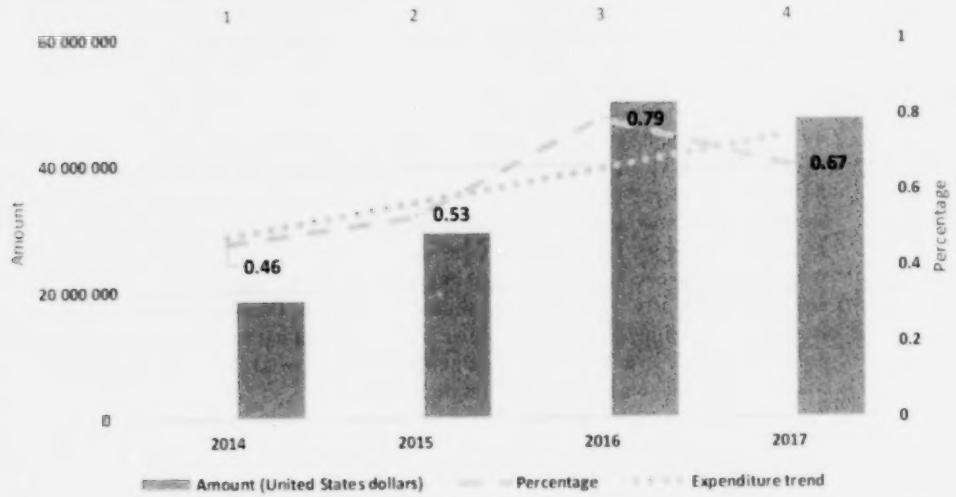
Abbreviations: East Asia and the Pacific (EAPR), Europe and Central Asia (ECAR), Eastern and Southern Africa (ESAR), headquarters (HQ), Latin America and Caribbean (LACR), Middle East and North Africa (MENA), South Asia (SA) and West and Central Africa (WCAR).
Source: Evaluation Management Response Tracking System.

Spending on evaluation

50. The revised UNICEF evaluation policy of 2013 set a target for spending on evaluation of 1 per cent of total programme expenditure. At the end of 2017, this indicator was reported to be at 0.67 per cent. An analysis of evaluation budget use for the period 2016–2017 shows that spending on evaluation increased in both dollar and percentage terms. At the beginning of the implementation period for the Strategic Plan, 2014–2017, an estimated $18.7 million was spent on evaluation. This figure had increased to $47.5 million by the end of 2017, indicating a greater commitment of resources towards evaluation. The percentage had also risen from 0.46 per cent to 0.67 per cent by the end of the period (see figure VIII).

51. The revised evaluation policy of 2018 will provide for a pooled fund to support evaluation capacity development, especially at the decentralized level; organization-wide professionalization; innovation in evaluation; and strategic evaluations.

Figure VIII
Trend in the use of evaluation budget, 2014–2017



Source: Global Evaluation Function Performance Dashboard.

Corporate-level evaluations

52. Activities considered under this indicator are corporate-level evaluations undertaken by the Evaluation Office. These include evaluations listed under the plan for global thematic evaluations 2014–2017 and the review and update for 2016–2017 (E/ICEF/2016/3).

53. The Evaluation Office made all the evaluations available to the Executive Board and the general public in 2017. Moreover, four corporate evaluations/reviews and the accompanying management responses were presented at informal consultations and sessions of the Executive Board during the year. These included:

(a) Evaluation of the UNICEF response to the Ebola outbreak in West Africa 2014–2015;

(b) DAC-UNEG peer review of the Evaluation Function of UNICEF;

(c) United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF): Review of development effectiveness, 2012–2015;

(d) Evaluation of the UNICEF Peacebuilding, Education and Advocacy Programme.

54. In addition, the following corporate evaluative products were finalized or initiated in 2017, in line with the plan for global thematic evaluations 2014–2017: review and update for 2016–2017.

Evaluation of the H4+ Joint Programme (joint initiative of six United Nations agencies for technical support of the Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health)

55. H4+ is a joint programme of UNICEF, UNFPA, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank (later joined by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women)) aimed at leveraging the respective agencies' strengths and coordinating assistance to accelerate the progress of the health-related Millennium Development Goals. The evaluation, completed in 2017, was jointly managed by UNFPA, UNICEF and Global Affairs Canada. The evaluation and the management response were presented to the joint informal consultation of the Executive Boards of UNICEF and UNFPA in January 2018.

56. The evaluation found that the programme helped the H4+ partners working at the country level to develop a new type of collaboration, resulting in an increase in the volume and coherence of their policy engagement and advocacy, particularly in translating global guidance into national policy support. Several results are likely to be sustained after programme completion, including improved and updated national policies, guidelines and training curricula as well as the system-wide strengthening of maternal-death surveillance and response. However, in targeted, underserved and isolated areas, gains in the availability and quality of services were more at risk, due to weak exit plans. The programme was deemed to need more systematic attention to documentation and more-developed systems and approaches to knowledge management to increase a shared understanding of lessons learned.

57. Efforts to strengthen health systems for reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health encountered policy and resource constraints, including in human resources for health, health financing, transport infrastructure and electricity as well as in the lack of reliable clean water in health facilities. H4+ partners were not as effective in collectively advocating for intensified efforts to address these wider, cross-sectoral constraints. Finally, the programme did not take full advantage of the World Bank's role in supporting national Governments in health programmes and other critical sectors.

Towards improved emergency responses: synthesis of UNICEF evaluations of humanitarian action 2010–2016

58. The overarching aims of the synthesis evaluation, which covered 30 humanitarian evaluations, were to support accountability, contribute to learning and help UNICEF to realize its humanitarian objectives for vulnerable children. The evaluation and the management response were presented at the 2018 first regular session of the Executive Board.

59. The synthesis tells an encouraging story of progress and improvement. UNICEF is shown to have learned from experience and adapted its approach to become faster and more effective, while contributing to the wider reforms of the humanitarian system. It reflects an organization that has evolved considerably since the learning

experiences of Haiti in 2010. New procedures have been implemented, new ways of working developed and learning generated and shared. Reforms to the wider humanitarian system, in which UNICEF has played a prominent role, are reflected in improvements in inter-agency coordination in addition to UNICEF corporate and operational practice.

60. In line with its fundamental ethos of ground-based action for children in emergencies, the synthesis found UNICEF humanitarian responses to be mostly relevant. Programming was also strongly aligned, where feasible, with national responses, priorities and plans. UNICEF takes its responsibilities as a humanitarian actor seriously, participating in joint responses to emergencies and prioritizing partnerships. Overall, the synthesis shows some important results for children facing conflict and crisis. UNICEF has contributed to the reduced transmission of disease, helped to prevent hunger and undernutrition and provided clean water and education to many vulnerable children. It has protected children in high-threat environments and built the capacity of local and national actors in humanitarian situations.

61. Specific areas identified by the evaluations of humanitarian responses as needing improvement include:

(a) Needs assessments for affected populations, even under accessible conditions, are sometimes incomplete or too general, leading to limited or absent strategic frameworks or designs. Consequently, opportunity-based, rather than needs-based, programming persists in the initial response. The evaluations revealed that where assumptions made at the design stage subsequently proved to be incorrect, UNICEF often quickly reoriented the programme to achieve relevance;

(b) Commitments on accountability to affected populations require a more proactive, consistent and strategic approach;

(c) The building of clear links between humanitarian and development responses needs improvement. Planning for transition and resilience has, at times, suffered constraints, including a lack of external funding.

62. As part of the synthesis of evaluations of UNICEF humanitarian action, a synthesis evaluation of UNICEF action in water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in humanitarian situations was conducted to assess: (a) the organization's performance in humanitarian action in WASH over the period 2010–2016, and whether it had improved over time; (b) factors that supported or constrained improvement; and (c) lessons that could be learned to improve WASH programmes. The synthesis, which reviewed findings from 26 evaluations of UNICEF humanitarian action in WASH, found that UNICEF emergency WASH responses in the field performed well overall, given the challenging contexts in which they were carried out and the funding and staffing constraints. Areas in which a positive trend was identified included the application of the rapid response mechanism and increased accountability to affected populations. Areas in which no clear improvement over time was identified included emergency preparedness, needs assessments, resilience-oriented response and data/monitoring of cost effectiveness. This points to a need for a more consistent mechanism for learning and for disseminating and applying knowledge and good practices generated through experience. The UNICEF WASH response is still in the learning phase when it comes to working in urban settings and with cash/voucher systems. Considerable potential exists for learning and further advancing these increasingly high-priority items on the humanitarian agenda.

Evaluation of UNICEF strategies and programmes to reduce stunting in children under 5 years of age

63. This global synthesis report presented a comprehensive evaluation of UNICEF work to address child stunting. The evaluation covered a six-year period (2010–2015), when the global community was shifting its focus from reducing the number of underweight children to reducing the number of stunted children. The evaluation and management response have been completed and will be presented at the 2018 annual session of the Executive Board.

64. The evaluation found clear evidence of the leadership role played by UNICEF and the importance placed on strategic partnerships and alliances. It also demonstrated the ways in which those partnerships and alliances were facilitated by the organization's technical expertise and recognized credibility with regard to children and nutrition, albeit with variations across regions and countries. The UNICEF approach to the Scaling Up Nutrition initiative provided a framework for stunting-reduction activities among partners. However, the Strategic Plan, 2014–2017 should have better promoted cross-sectoral and inter-agency coordination in carrying out these approaches. UNICEF country programmes provided multiple examples of successful advocacy and progress towards achieving such relevant outputs as the improvement of policy frameworks and an increase in government commitment and capacity-building at the national, subnational and front-line worker levels. The evaluation documents a growing focus on multisectoral approaches, although clear examples of the implementation of those approaches as part of country programmes were found in only half the countries.

Joint evaluability assessment of the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage

This joint assessment examined the extent to which progress towards the objectives and results of the Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage could be readily and reliably measured, monitored and evaluated. To achieve this purpose, the assessment examined the programme design and theory of change on the assumption that a well-designed programme produces better results. It also studied the reporting of progress and results, the adequacy of resources to meet the objectives and the monitoring and evaluation system for ensuring learning and accountability.

65. While noting the importance of the programme, the assessment found that:

(a) There were opportunities to improve the programme design and global theory of change;

(b) The global results framework required significant refinement to enable meaningful results tracking;

(c) The value addition and potential of a joint programme was not being fully realized;

(d) The funding was unpredictable and short-term, posing a significant challenge to a global programme aimed at long-term social change;

(e) There was a need to establish a "proof of concept" to learn what combination of strategies worked best to reduce child marriage;

(f) Baselines for prevalence and outputs were in place, but those for outcomes needed to be established.

This evaluability assessment, which has been completed, and the management response (in progress) will be shared with the Executive Board in mid-2018.

Evaluation of the Out-of-School Children Initiative

66. In partnership with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the Global Partnership for Education, the evaluation began in April 2017 with the aim of assessing progress towards a substantial and sustainable reduction in the number of out-of-school children. The evaluation examines effectiveness in providing technical and financial support and in communicating programme results. It also analyses government buy-in and the use of evidence from the studies for education sector policy and planning processes. The report will be finalized and shared in 2018.

Impact evaluation of early childhood development kits in Senegal

67. The twofold purpose of the evaluation is to (a) evaluate the impact of early childhood development (ECD) kit interventions on children's psychosocial well-being, early learning and development in humanitarian and development contexts; and (b) evaluate the effectiveness of different approaches for improving caregiver interactions with children and the use of the ECD kits for early learning and development. The evaluation compares the implementation of the foundational ECD kit intervention to an enhanced ECD kit intervention after a period of approximately one year. The report will be finalized and shared in 2018.

Humanitarian evaluation in Uganda

68. The evaluation is a direct response to the level-3 emergency in South Sudan that has displaced families into neighbouring Uganda, which currently hosts around 1 million refugees. On average, as many as 4,000 South Sudanese are said to cross the border into Uganda daily, fuelling Africa's largest refugee crisis. The evaluation is taking place in the world's largest refugee settlement, Bidibidi, in the Yumbe district, in northern Uganda, to which 275,000 women and children have fled from conflict. The evaluation is under way and will be finalized and shared in 2018.

Evaluation of the coverage and quality of the UNICEF response in complex humanitarian situations

69. The Evaluation Office has initiated work on this evaluation, which is being conducted in support of the cross-cutting priority and related change strategy on humanitarian action outlined in the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021. The objectives of the evaluation are: (a) to assess the coverage and quality of UNICEF humanitarian action on the basis of a sample of complex high-threat environments, including identifying internal and external enabling factors and challenges; (b) to identify internal and external enabling factors for and challenges to the fulfilment by UNICEF of its protection mandate in complex humanitarian evaluations, including its designated role in the monitoring and reporting mechanism resulting from Security Council resolutions on children affected by armed conflict; and (c) to capture good practices and innovations that are improving humanitarian action in complex high-threat environments and analyse their potential for more general application by UNICEF.

70. An in-depth scoping of the evaluation was undertaken in 2017 to ensure that it was informed by evidence, including identifying any evaluability issues. The scoping identified the evaluation's rationale and purpose as well as objectives, scope and methodological options. The terms of reference for the comprehensive evaluation were also set out. The Evaluation Office commissioned a learning phase exercise aimed at gathering the views of country and regional offices on the challenges they faced in achieving coverage and quality in their humanitarian response, and to identify good practices to be investigated more fully. The evaluation will cover 12 country case studies (five country-visit case studies and seven case studies based on

document review and remote interviews). The evaluation is being implemented in two phases: inception/pilot and main evaluation.

Strengthening child protection systems: evaluation of UNICEF strategies and programme performance

71. In 2017, the Evaluation Office initiated a formative evaluation to examine the organization's leadership role, strategies and programme performance in strengthening child protection systems. The evaluation will assess past and current approaches to child protection systems strengthening and generate learning on effective approaches, including: (a) UNICEF contributions to legal reform; (b) the use of upstream policy work; (c) multisectoral engagement; (d) child protection financing; (e) governance and coordination; (f) capacity development; (g) service delivery; (h) data and knowledge management; and (i) partnerships, among other areas. The evaluation will be finalized in late 2018 and the report shared in 2019.

Evaluation of the UNICEF contribution to health systems strengthening

72. In 2017, the Evaluation Office initiated a prospective, formative evaluation of the work of UNICEF in health systems strengthening (HSS), one of the three pillars of the organization's Strategy for Health 2016–2030. The successful roll-out and implementation of the HSS approach will require changes in both the working methods of UNICEF and the activities that they support. The evaluation will examine two separate but interrelated domains: (a) the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, equity focus and sustainability of the HSS approach at the organizational level during the transitional period; and (b) HSS programming at the implementation level in specific focus areas, assessing the evaluability of results and their likely sustainability. The evaluation will be finalized in late 2018 and the report shared in 2019.

Evaluation of the UNICEF Gender Action Plan

73. In 2017, the Evaluation Office conducted an analytical review of the Gender Action Plan, 2014–2017, which provided an analysis of related documentation issued in the period 2008–2017. The review was commissioned to address two needs: (a) to support a potential future evaluation of the development, design and implementation of the plan; and (b) to inform ongoing discussions about the Gender Action Plan, 2018–2021 and the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021. The exercise provided important findings regarding the Gender Action Plan in terms of conceptual clarity, the selection of targeted priorities, implementation capacity, mainstreaming, partnerships and knowledge management as well as implications for the future. The report will be an important resource for the evaluation of the Gender Action Plan, 2014–2017, which will commence in the second half of 2018.

Evaluation of the UNICEF-UNFPA joint programme on female genital mutilation/cutting

74. This scoping exercise was jointly commissioned by UNICEF and UNFPA, with UNFPA as the lead agency. The exercise informed the drafting of the terms of reference for the forthcoming evaluation, which is expected to start in mid-2018.

VI. Assessment of the evaluation function

75. DAC-UNEG peer reviews identify good practices and opportunities for strengthening the evaluation function in the agency under review, with a view to contributing to improved performance in the delivery of the agency's mandate. The

2017 peer review of the UNICEF evaluation function noted many recent positive findings: improvement in the quality of evaluation over time; significant improvement in compliance with management responses; the active role of the Evaluation Office in the international evaluation community and in strengthening national evaluation capacity development; and the commitment of UNICEF to achieving the target of allocating a minimum of 1 per cent of programme expenditure to evaluation.

76. Despite this progress, the overall assessment of the review against the three core UNEG norms of independence, credibility and utility rated the UNICEF evaluation function either "short of satisfactory" (independence and credibility) or "close to satisfactory" (utility), on a binary scale of satisfactory/unsatisfactory.

77. UNICEF accepted most of the recommendations and is making progress in implementing the management response. To date, 97 per cent of actions have been initiated (26 per cent have been completed and 71 per cent are under way). Some of the completed actions include: (a) the establishment of the external Evaluation Advisory Panel; (b) the reflection in the plan for global evaluations of the evaluation priorities for the whole organization; (c) the revision of the evaluation policy to address some of the review's key recommendations; (d) the revision of the evaluation key performance indicators; and (e) the establishment of a pooled fund to help support more evaluations.

78. During the past two years, independent external assessments of the performance of the UNICEF evaluation function have provided useful suggestions and pointed to important lessons on further strengthening the function. Through the plan for global evaluations, 2018–2021 and the revised evaluation policy, UNICEF has put in place a series of strategies in response to those suggestions and lessons. They include the following:

(a) *Increased capacity at the decentralized level to conduct and manage evaluations*. When established, the proposed pooled-funding mechanism will help to ensure the needed capacity for evaluations at the regional and country levels;

(b) *The improvement of organizational learning through the use of evaluation findings and recommendations*. A knowledge management unit is being established in the Evaluation Office to improve the use of evaluations. Collaborative "work streams" are being developed with regional offices on technical guidance for areas in need of improvement, including the conduct and use of country programme evaluations, evaluability assessments and humanitarian evaluations.

(c) *The acceleration of national evaluation capacity development through the expansion of partnerships with other United Nations entities and global evaluation networks*;

(d) *The increased timeliness of evaluations for greater usefulness through a review of work processes and methodologies*.

VII. Conclusion

79. 2017 was an important year for the UNICEF evaluation function. The peer review outlined key recommendations for improving the function, most of which were endorsed by the management response. The governance of the function continued to improve with the expansion of the Audit Advisory Committee to include an evaluation expert and the establishment of the external Evaluation Advisory Panel. UNICEF continued to engage through UNEG on the proposals of the Secretary-General to strengthen system-wide evaluation. The mapping of initiatives in national evaluation

capacity development also laid the foundation for more effective engagement at the country level.

80. Overall, the performance of the evaluation function showed improvement in the geographical coverage of evaluations and a portfolio oriented towards outcome- and impact-level evaluations. In addition, the requirement of the evaluation policy for a management response to every evaluation was almost universally adhered to, and there have been indications that measures taken to monitor the implementation of management responses are working. Evaluations that are independently assessed as highly satisfactory are also increasing.

81. Nevertheless, there is a need to increase the number of evaluations that are submitted each year by all levels of the organization. There is a strong suggestion that the number of evaluations is related to the level of spending on evaluation. Evaluation spending dropped from 0.8 per cent of total programme spending in 2016 to 0.67 per cent in 2017. The decrease in spending and in the number of evaluations was especially noticeable at the country level in three regions.

82. The fast-changing context in which UNICEF operates requires timely ways of generating evaluation evidence. The evaluation function will review its methodologies to this end. Furthermore, considering that the UNICEF response to crises has grown considerably (from 294 humanitarian situations in 98 country offices in 2014 to 344 humanitarian situations in 108 offices in 2016), the evaluation function will be more focused on generating the necessary evidence on what is working (or not) in such contexts.

83. The revision of the evaluation policy will ensure that the necessary conditions are provided for improvements in all the performance indicators, including the number of submissions each year and the geographical coverage of evaluations as well as quality, use and spending. The revision of the evaluation policy will also ensure that UNICEF is well equipped to further support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the 2016 QCPR. The UNICEF evaluation function will work with sister agencies and Member States to produce credible and timely evaluation evidence that will promote learning and continuous improvement and deepen accountability for achieving results for children, especially the most vulnerable.

VIII. Draft decision

The Executive Board

Takes note of the annual report for 2017 on the evaluation function in UNICEF (E/ICEF/2018/15).

United Nations E/ICEF/2018/16

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
13 April 2018

Original: English

For decision

United Nations Children's Fund
Executive Board
Annual session 2018
11–14 June 2018
Item 8 of the provisional agenda*

Evaluation of UNICEF strategies and programmes to reduce stunting in children under 5 years of age

Executive Summary**

Summary

Stunting in early childhood is a major global concern given its links to child mortality and morbidity, irreversible loss of cognitive development, and loss of productivity, wages and national income. Despite progress made in recent decades, estimates suggest that about 156 million children under 5 years of age (about one in four) have stunted growth. There is considerable momentum for accelerating progress to reduce stunting in young children. Most importantly, target 2.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals calls for ending "all forms of malnutrition, including achieving, by 2025, the internationally agreed targets on stunting and wasting in children under 5 years of age."

For many decades, UNICEF has been a lead organization in advocacy, policy and programme response for improving maternal and child nutrition both in emergency and development contexts. The report evaluates the organization's global stunting-reduction strategies and efforts. UNICEF is shown to have global strategies to reduce stunting that are coherent and largely aligned with global goals, priorities and initiatives. However, gaps and challenges remain. Inadequate political commitment and capacities represent a challenge in most countries and are most evident in the fragile countries included in the evaluation, where UNICEF may need to concentrate on more individual approaches to meet immediate needs.

* E/ICEF/2018/8.

** The executive summary of the evaluation report is being circulated in all official languages of the United Nations. The full report, entitled "Reducing stunting in children under 5 years of age: A comprehensive evaluation of UNICEF's strategies and programme performance – Global synthesis report," is available in English from the UNICEF Evaluation Office website.

Note: The present document was processed in its entirety by UNICEF.

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I. Introduction

1. Approximately 156 million of the world's children under age 5 are stunted, with an estimated 80 per cent of these children concentrated in only 14 countries.[1] Stunting jeopardizes child survival and development by contributing to child mortality, morbidity and disability, including impaired or suboptimal physical growth and cognitive development.[2] A child's rights to survival, growth and development are vital to the mission of UNICEF, whose work is underpinned by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Therefore, reducing stunting among young children fully aligns with the organization's core mission.

2. In recent years, the global nutrition community has increased its focus on stunting. Scientific developments support the causal relationship between stunting and impaired short-term childhood development, as well as long-term intergenerational effects on individuals and families. These relationships highlight the importance of adequate nutrition during the first 1,000 days between a woman's pregnancy and her child's second birthday, a period associated with risks of irreversible effects among children.[3] In addition, research provides evidence identifying effective, cost-efficient and scalable interventions to address stunting.[4] Concurrently, the international community recognizes lessons learned and models to support multisectoral approaches to reduce stunting.

3. UNICEF funding and investment in nutrition has more than doubled over the past decade and the nutrition programme expenditure reached $484 million in 2014. In addition, there has been significant growth in funding for health; water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH); education; and social protection, areas that have significant implications for preventing stunting in young children. Given global commitments and growing investments by UNICEF, the organization has conducted an evaluation of its stunting-reduction strategies and efforts.

4. The evaluation is the first formal, global attempt to assess UNICEF global strategies and country programme performance in reducing stunting among children under age 5. The evaluation consists of three related components: a desk review of documents from a sample of 24 countries reflecting all seven UNICEF regions and including data from a survey; in-depth case studies of UNICEF stunting-reduction strategies and activities in six countries; and a global synthesis report of UNICEF efforts.

5. The evaluation period (2010–2015) represents a transitional time when the global community was gradually shifting its focus from efforts to reduce the number of underweight children to efforts to reduce the number of stunted children. In most countries, UNICEF has prioritized stunting only relatively recently. Therefore, the evaluation is formative: it considers plans and progress in light of this transition, and presents findings and forward-looking recommendations.

6. The evaluation addresses three objectives:

(a) Assess the relevance, appropriateness and coherence of the UNICEF global, regional and country strategies and plans to address stunting in young children.

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[1] United Nations Children's Fund, World Health Organization and the World Bank, '2015 Joint Child Malnutrition Estimates'; World Health Organization, 'Moderate Malnutrition: 2015', www.who.int/nutrition/topics/moderate_malnutrition/en/, accessed 11 March 2018.

[2] Olofin, I., et al., 'Associations of suboptimal growth with all-cause and cause-specific mortality in children under five years: A pooled analysis of ten prospective studies', *PLoS One*, vol. 8, no. 5, 2013, e64636.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Bhutta, Z. A., et al., 'Evidence-based interventions for improvement of maternal and child Nutrition: What can be done and at what cost?', *The Lancet*, vol. 382, no. 9890, 2013, pp. 452–477.

(b) Assess the effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of UNICEF country programmes in addressing stunting in young children, with particular attention to less-reached, disadvantaged and vulnerable groups; [and] draw lessons on equitable progress in reducing stunting in various programme contexts.

(c) Assess UNICEF leadership, guidance and technical support at all levels, as well as the adequacy of UNICEF staffing and its institutional capacity to respond to the lead role the organization is expected to play in contributing to the sustainable and equitable reduction of stunting.

7. The synthesis report draws evidence and recommendations for each of the issues covered, including operational aspects, to strengthen advocacy, policies, guidance and programme response to further reduce stunting in young children.

II. Evaluation approach

8. The evaluation's broad purpose is to contribute to meeting the accountability needs of UNICEF, to learn about its contributions to the global stunting-reduction targets, and especially to provide sound evaluation evidence and conclusions that can be used to strengthen programme performance. The evaluation conclusions and recommendations will inform future global strategies, regional priority setting and country-level programme development and response.

9. The evaluation relied on a regionally and globally selected sample of countries, and includes an in-depth look at selected countries to assess UNICEF country programme performance and regional and global support. The in-depth evaluation emphasizes South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, two regions that have a high stunting prevalence in children younger than 5 years old, and identified middle-income countries where stunting levels remain high despite gains in other socioeconomic indicators. The countries selected represent diverse programme contexts and experiences.

10. The evaluation also examined UNICEF efforts at regional and global levels in the context of support given to country programmes, as well the organization's contributions to global knowledge and stunting prevention. The evaluation focused on programmes operational from 2010 to 2015 and incorporated strategic documents issued from 2014 to 2015 that reflect recent acceleration in advocacy and programmatic efforts to reduce stunting. The evaluation considered all areas of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2014–2017 and how each area contributed to reducing stunting. However, the analysis of the effectiveness of the results focuses on the nutrition programme and the programme's linkages to and from the relevant sectors.

11. In terms of the relevance, appropriateness, adequacy and coherence of strategies and plans, the evaluation sought to answer the following questions:

(a) How relevant, appropriate, adequate and coherent are UNICEF programmes, strategies and plans to reduce stunting at the global, regional and country levels?

(b) How appropriate are strategies for multisectoral efforts to reduce stunting globally and in country contexts?

12. In terms of leadership and leveraging partnerships, the evaluation sought to answer:

(a) Is UNICEF effective in leading and leveraging partnerships to reduce stunting?

(b) What is the role of UNICEF related to global leadership and leveraging of partnerships to reduce stunting, including through the SUN [Scaling Up Nutrition] Movement and the REACH [Renewed Efforts against Child Hunger and undernutrition] initiative?

(c) How effective is the UNICEF partnership role globally and in regions with high rates of stunting?

(d) How effective is UNICEF in leveraging national Government and country-level partnerships to effectively promote strategies and implement country plans?

13. In terms of effectiveness of country programmes in addressing stunting, the evaluation examined:

(a) How effective are UNICEF country programmes in addressing stunting and its immediate and underlying causes?

(b) Which strategies and interventions (nutrition-specific as well as broad-based upstream policy work, multisectoral work and partnerships) have been used effectively by UNICEF to reduce stunting in various contexts?

14. To examine knowledge/data generation, management and use, the evaluation asked:

(a) Does UNICEF sufficiently and appropriately promote the generation and utilization of knowledge and data to realize its stunting-reduction strategies and programmes?

(b) How has UNICEF contributed to relevant knowledge, the establishment or strengthening of effective nutrition information systems, data collection and analysis, and to monitoring and evaluation of outcomes and impact in relation to stunting, including a focus on equity?

(c) What areas of data use or dissemination of the results of research and evaluation require strengthening at the global, regional and country levels, and how can UNICEF contribute to the strengthening efforts?

15. To examine the efficiency of management and operations, the evaluation addressed:

(a) Are the UNICEF management and operations approaches and resources adequate and efficiently utilized for its stunting-reduction strategies and programmes?

(b) Do country programmes support the efficient implementation of programme actions, build commitment and strengthen leadership and governance for improved nutrition?

(c) How adequate and efficient is UNICEF internal coordination, including integration and convergence of various programme components/sectors?

(d) Are financial and staff resource allocations for addressing stunting at the global and country levels adequate and well managed?

III. Selected findings

16. The evaluation used a mix of qualitative and quantitative data and analytical methods. Qualitative data allowed for an in-depth understanding of key issues related to UNICEF efforts to address stunting. Quantitative data collection and analysis allowed inclusion of information not consistently available in previous documents and helped to systematically capture the relevant indicators across countries. The evaluation employed a formative approach to assess progress on the implementation of strategies and approaches to achieve the outputs outlined in the Strategic Plan.

17. The evaluation used global, regional and country-level data from seven sources:

(a) In-depth fieldwork in six case-study countries, including site visits and key informant interviews with a variety of UNICEF staff and national partners;

(b) Detailed review of documentation and secondary data from 24 programme countries;

(c) An online survey of the 24 UNICEF country offices;

(d) An online survey of 51 external stakeholders in the 24 programme countries;

(e) Broad-based consultations and key informant interviews at UNICEF New York headquarters;

(f) Key informant interviews with regional nutrition officers in six regions; and

(g) Key informant interviews with 10 external partners at the global level.

18. The selection of the 24 countries ensured a diverse representation of countries with a stunting prevalence greater than 20 per cent, or countries with relatively high expenditures in nutrition. Every region was represented by a minimum of two and a maximum of five countries.[5]

19. The 24 countries selected reflect all seven UNICEF regions, including three from South Asia; four from West and Central Africa; five from Eastern and Southern Africa; four from East Asia and the Pacific; three from the Middle East and North Africa; three from Latin America and Caribbean; and two from Europe and Central Asia.[6] The 24 countries selected are classified as both low- and middle-income countries. Ten (42 per cent) of the 24 evaluation countries are low-income and the remaining 14 (58 per cent) countries are middle-income. Additionally, 11 (46 per cent) of the 24 countries selected are fragile.

20. The six countries selected for the case studies, by UNICEF region, were Cambodia (East Asia and the Pacific), Mozambique and Rwanda (Eastern and Southern Africa), Haiti (Latin America and Caribbean), India (South Asia) and the Niger (West and Central Africa).

A. Relevance, appropriateness, adequacy and coherence of strategies and plans

Global level

21. Global stakeholders remark that UNICEF is well respected for its leadership on issues regarding children. Stakeholders concur that UNICEF consistently brings children's issues to the forefront of discussions, especially with respect to infant and young child feeding and other nutrition-specific programming.

22. As the global conversation has changed from a focus on infant and young child feeding or other nutrition-specific programmes to a focus on a multisectoral approach with common objectives and framing common results, stakeholders are mixed as to the UNICEF response. While some stakeholders believe that UNICEF is focusing on the correct activities and broadening global understanding of nutrition to include a more multisectoral approach, the evaluation finds that, overall, UNICEF is widely regarded as still being strongly geared towards nutrition-specific interventions.

[5] With guidance from the UNICEF Evaluation Office, specific countries were excluded from selection due to their recent inclusion in multiple Evaluation Office-commissioned evaluations. Their inclusion might have increased the risk of respondent fatigue, particularly since a wealth of information had already been extracted from these countries. Contributions from the regional offices helped to identify programmes of particular interest or concern for study.

[6] The name of the region was formerly Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States and was in effect during the period of the evaluation. Effective 1 August 2017, the name of the UNICEF region was changed to Europe and Central Asia.

23. External stakeholders note significant gaps in understanding and coordination across the sectors (e.g., WASH, social protection and education) needed to further nutrition-sensitive initiatives. These gaps exist across stakeholder groups (Governments, donors and civil society organizations) at the global and country levels and within UNICEF. Staff note that UNICEF has not maintained pace with the shift from a focus on underweight to stunting prevalence. They note that since all nutrition outcomes, including obesity, are interlinked, UNICEF should consider a programme that focuses on the prevention of multiple nutritional deficits.

24. The discussion paper entitled 'UNICEF's approach to scaling up nutrition for mothers and their children'[7] provides guidance to facilitate understanding of the issues and responses to stunting and other nutritional outcomes. However, the evaluation identifies a gap in understanding of the definition and implementation of nutrition-sensitive approaches to stunting reduction across all levels at UNICEF. Staff note an internal lack of knowledge about nutrition-sensitive approaches and the need to create linkages and discussions across different viewpoints.

25. The UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2014–2017 supported multisectoral approaches to improving nutrition and includes a specific outcome: "improved and equitable use of nutritional support and improved nutrition and care practices." These approaches are supported by identified programme actions and operational steps – which depend on the local context and take into account knowledge of previous engagements with country partners and communities – and together provide the directives to strategically and continually improve programme performance.

26. However, while some strategies exist to incorporate multisectoral approaches into the work of UNICEF work to reduce stunting at the country level, these strategies are generally limited to bisectoral approaches with education, social protection, maternal health, or WASH. Even if multisectoral approaches are implemented, difficulties may arise in the absence of true collaboration and understanding of responsibilities. Both external stakeholders and UNICEF staff agree that UNICEF often misses opportunities related to stunting because it takes a siloed approach to planning, incentives, accountability and sectoral priorities. Many staff note that the organization's structure does not align with the global Common Results Framework approach of the SUN Movement, making it difficult to fully understand how the approach can best be implemented at the country level.

27. Staff note that, because strategic goals largely reflect past plans and country programmes mirror the structure of the Strategic Plan, 2014–2017, there tends to be little change in activities over time. This process and approach to planning is criticized by those desiring more multisectoral work and innovation.

28. Stakeholders and staff remark that UNICEF needs to broaden its understanding of nutrition at the global level to include more multisectoral approaches, including additional ways to accomplish the same outcomes across different contexts. This includes expanding research and analysis into the pathways from investment to impact, especially to glean an understanding of the impacts of multisectoral approaches as opposed to single-sector approaches. There is insufficient guidance within UNICEF on working in an integrated and multisectoral manner; while the Strategic Plan, 2014–2017 acknowledged the need to work in a multisectoral manner, it did not operationalize how such work can be performed.

[7] United Nations Children's Fund, UNICEF's approach to scaling up nutrition for mothers and their children. Discussion paper, Programme Division, UNICEF, New York, June 2015, www.unicef.org/nutrition/files/Unicef_Nutrition_Strategy.pdf.

29. Staff and stakeholders agree that, while multisectoral approaches are necessary to provide a sustainable environment to prevent adverse nutrition outcomes, treatment remains necessary while enabling environments are put in place. In particular, UNICEF should not neglect treatment of severe acute malnutrition and wasting at the family and household level.

30. UNICEF global strategies to reduce stunting are coherent and largely aligned with global goals and priorities (i.e., the Millennium Development Goals, the World Health Assembly Global Nutrition Targets and the Sustainable Development Goals) and global initiatives such as the SUN Movement and the 2014 Rome Declaration on Nutrition and Framework for Action.

31. Overall, UNICEF demonstrates understanding of the importance of an enabling environment to improved and equitable use of nutritional support, improved nutrition and care practices, and use of defined outputs and output indicators. However, while the discussion paper entitled 'UNICEF's approach to scaling up nutrition for mothers and their children' provides a framework and approaches for stunting-reduction programmes, these approaches are not reflected in the Strategic Plan, 2014–2017 in a manner that clearly promotes coordination of activities to reduce stunting or improve other nutrition outcomes across sectors.

Regional level

32. A review of regional planning documents shows evidence of the inclusion of stunting reduction as a regional priority or programmatic focus area in most regions. Among the UNICEF regions, the Regional Office for South Asia has most clearly articulated a focus on stunting reduction, and its planning documents discuss multisectorality and nutrition-sensitive approaches. In light of the high prevalence (38 per cent) and the large burden (about 40 per cent of the global burden) of child stunting in South Asia, the Regional Office for South Asia has clearly identified child stunting as a top priority. The Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, on the other hand, has a relatively low stunting prevalence (11 per cent), hence, the lack of a specific focus on stunting in the region's plans is not surprising.

Country level

33. At the country level, most survey respondents indicate that their country offices have an overarching strategy or framework to address stunting. However, a review of country planning documents shows that countries rarely include reduction in the prevalence of stunting as an outcome or output, and no country offices had produced a formal theory of change to address stunting. These findings are expected, because country programmes are programmes of cooperation with national Governments, and from 2010 to 2015, national Government priorities were aligned with the Millennium Development Goals rather than focused on reducing the number of underweight children or the prevalence of stunting.

34. An analysis of the alignment of country plans with the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2014–2017 outputs generally shows more emphasis on increased capacity for availability of, access to and use of nutrition services, support and supplies for the prevention of stunting and the treatment of severe wasting. Country offices in fragile countries emphasize delivery of services and nutrition interventions instead of higher-level policy and advocacy work. Middle-income countries are more comprehensive in addressing outputs specified in the Strategic Plan and more likely to focus on upstream outputs.

B. Leadership and leveraging partnerships for addressing stunting

35. Leadership and leveraging partnerships are essential to the work of UNICEF to support host Governments, development stakeholders and communities to sustainably reduce stunting, particularly among vulnerable populations. Enhanced collaboration through active partnerships helps to ensure that resources are efficiently utilized, duplication and waste are avoided, and shared targets are set and supported to address the immediate and underlying causes of stunting.

36. UNICEF has served as a lead agency for the global nutrition cluster, a group that enables country coordination mechanisms to support timely, quality and appropriate nutrition responses to emergencies. In 2014, UNICEF New York worked closely with the World Health Organization, the World Food Programme, the Emergency Nutrition Network and other partners to develop guidance on different aspects of nutrition in the context of the Ebola epidemic. UNICEF also played a key role in a regional inter-agency consultation on emergency food security and nutrition preparedness and response in the Horn of Africa, with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the World Food Programme and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

37. The evaluation found clear evidence of relevant leadership activities undertaken by UNICEF and of the significance that UNICEF places on strengthening partnerships and strategic alliances at the global, regional and country levels. UNICEF has a leadership role in most of the relevant global partnerships and initiatives. Leadership activities vary across regional offices due to differing contextual factors. UNICEF leadership in nutrition and stunting is widely respected, and stakeholders believe the organization can effectively unite partners for strategic planning to improve child nutrition. Working through partnerships, UNICEF led or co-led the development of mechanisms and guidelines relevant to nutrition and stunting. UNICEF hosted and/or led multiple high-visibility events that brought together partners across multiple sectors.

38. However, according to the evaluation, UNICEF is sometimes viewed as reluctant to engage with stakeholders outside of the United Nations. This reluctance could reflect an unwillingness to involve non-United Nations parties in ensuring the well-being of children. It could also be a result of the lack of a clear vision on how to incorporate nutrition-sensitive strategies into conventional nutrition-specific approaches. In addition, while there is collaboration with other United Nations agencies, there appears to be a lack of cohesion and coordination in the United Nations system.

39. With regard to country-level collaborations and partnerships, the evaluation found that UNICEF cooperates with key country counterpart institutions to implement programme interventions to address stunting. All country offices identify at least one counterpart institution, and most countries report three or more. The most commonly cited partners are government ministries or departments[8] and non-governmental organizations.

40. At the country level, all countries identified potential stakeholders as currently having little or no involvement in stunting-reduction efforts. In some countries, government ministries that could be included are regularly involved in other country efforts, such as agriculture, social protection, education and WASH. Their non-involvement in stunting-reduction efforts is indicative of existing gaps in translating global stunting-related guidance to the country level. Other ministries, including finance, industry and labour, show a growing understanding of the multisectoral integration needed to reduce stunting. Country offices also identified non-governmental organizations and donor organizations that could play a larger

[8] Ministries in the national Governments are considered by UNICEF as implementing partners.

role in local stunting-reduction efforts. Several countries express a need for more private sector engagement. Religious and environmental groups are also named as potential partners.

C. Effectiveness of country programmes in addressing stunting

Upstream approaches

41. The evaluation found that while there exist multiple examples of successful advocacy for improved policy frameworks, increased government commitment and other upstream achievements related to addressing stunting, the need for additional progress is consistently reported by both country offices and external stakeholders. Country offices in low-income and fragile countries are less likely to report upstream approaches.

Capacity-building

42. The evaluation produced mixed findings on capacity-building. All countries reported capacity-development activities, largely related to specific interventions such as infant and young child feeding, micronutrients, community management of acute malnutrition, and various aspects of monitoring and evaluation and data and knowledge generation. Middle-income countries more often focused on data collection, whereas low-income countries concentrated their training efforts on direct interventions.

43. It was important to note that only a small number of country offices considered these activities a key component in the approach to addressing stunting. However, external stakeholders are much more likely to view UNICEF capacity-building actions as critical to addressing stunting. These findings indicate that while UNICEF is clearly investing in capacity-building, the efforts in this area may need to be strengthened either through diversification of the types of capacity-building activities, or increasing their scale, or both.

Improved nutrition and care practices

44. In most of the countries selected, nutrition-specific interventions are among the key approaches to addressing stunting, and infant and young child feeding and prevention of micronutrient deficiencies are common. All of the country offices whose programmes were evaluated reported implementation of nutrition-sensitive interventions, either through the Micronutrient Initiative or infant and young child feeding activities. The evaluation also documented a growing focus on multisectoral approaches and support of nutrition-sensitive interventions.

45. However, clear examples of implementing such approaches and support as part of country office approaches to stunting reduction were found in only half of the countries, and initiatives were often limited to specific populations or geographic units, indicating that while progress in this area has been made, significant gaps remain.

Capacity and delivery of services in humanitarian situations

46. The evaluation found that fragile countries have a strong focus on the management of severe malnutrition. Country offices in fragile countries are also more likely to report that multiple preventive nutrition-specific interventions are key to their approach to address stunting. This may be indicative of UNICEF being overstretched to meet the greater needs of fragile countries, where a focus on severe acute malnutrition may eventually detract from more preventive interventions due to funding and capacity constraints.

D. Equity and reaching the most disadvantaged children

47. Inequalities may prevent disadvantaged populations from accessing nutrition services or adopting optimal nutrition practices, hence increasing the likelihood of stunting among children. While the global prevalence of stunting is declining, poor children remain more likely to be stunted than their wealthier counterparts. The evaluation reported that the latest statistics from the Global Health Observatory of the World Health Organization showed that globally, the median prevalence of stunting in children aged 5 years or younger was 35.2 per cent in the poorest quintile and 15.5 per cent in the richest quintile in 2006–2015.[9] Parental schooling wasalso consistently associated with improved nutrition outcomes.[10]

48. UNICEF utilizes an equity-focused approach to programme design and implementation, thereby enabling vulnerable populations to better benefit from access to nutrition services and information. The UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2014–2017 included an equity strategy on the disadvantaged and excluded to promote and protect children's rights. Gender equality is a key element in the refocus on equity, and UNICEF promotes gender-sensitive and gender-transformative approaches.

49. The UNICEF equity focus requires an understanding of poverty, vulnerability and marginalization as the causes and consequences of malnutrition, and a recognition that good nutrition practices will place all children at the same starting line. The equity focus also aims to ensure that girls and women have equitable access to proper nutrition, and demonstrates the organization's recognition that undernutrition is most rampant in settings where girls and women suffer from violence and discrimination.

50. Although most country offices specified the vulnerable population or populations in their country (with children living in extreme poverty being the most common category), only seven country offices included nutrition indicators disaggregated for the vulnerable populations. Children with disabilities were specified as a vulnerable group in three countries, with one country including specific indicators for children with disabilities.

51. Country offices documented successes, particularly in the areas of data generation and community-based approaches. Results from the case study countries showed that all countries focused on specific geographic areas or populations. However, scant disaggregated data do not allow a consistent assessment of whether these approaches yielded results in reducing stunting in disadvantaged and marginalized groups. Most country offices reported challenges in addressing the needs of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. Country offices and stakeholders agreed that inadequate systems and lack of coordination are the main challenges in working to address the stunting-related needs of vulnerable children. The evaluation further documented that availability of data at subnational levels and for specific population groups remains a challenge that can affect the ability to identify vulnerable populations and to track their progress.

E. Sustainability and scale-up

52. UNICEF coordination and partnerships are likely to be sustainable given current global attention to child stunting. Global attention helps keep stunting on the agenda of UNICEF and its partners. Improvements are needed in defining roles and ensuring multisectoral coordination; however, global partners appear committed to work together to address stunting. In addition, new global financing opportunities, such as the Power of Nutrition fund and the UNITLIFE financing mechanism, are expected to significantly increase revenue

[9] See: Global Health Observatory (GHO) data, Inequality in child malnutrition, www.who.int/gho/health_equity/outcomes/stunting_children/en/, accessed 14 March 2018.

[10] 'Executive Summary of *The Lancet* Maternal and Child Health Series', *The Lancet*, June 2013, www.thelancet.com/pb/assets/raw/Lancet/stories/series/nutrition-eng.pdf.

streams for nutrition in the coming years. UNICEF provided substantial support to the initiation of both of these funds.

53. The evaluation found that, at the country level, UNICEF integrated upstream policy, capacity-building and promotion of enabling environments through system strengthening in programme design and implementation. Upstream policy approaches were reported in 13 out of 24 countries and capacity-building activities were implemented in all 24 countries. In addition, the work of UNICEF with national Governments and its partnerships with other country stakeholders indicate the inclusive involvement of national stakeholders, thus promoting national ownership. This, in turn, is an important component of programme sustainability.

54. The evaluation found that technical and institutional considerations relevant to sustainability had been integrated in all UNICEF programmes, including upstream work, capacity-building and system strengthening. Although evidence on actual increases in national budgets for stunting was not consistently available, there are examples of an increased emphasis on financial planning and an indication that the dialogue with national Governments related to funding allocations has begun.

55. Risks to sustainability and scale-up of efforts to address stunting were found across all sample countries. Key risks common to all 24 countries include general resource constraints and funding unpredictability; lack of government commitment and a lack of stability; and limited infrastructure and capacity. In addition, lack of funding and staff coordination between UNICEF and other actors may exacerbate the risks to sustainability and scale-up of efforts to reduce stunting.

56. Funding, government commitment and capacity issues were reported by all countries, with very little variation by region, income level, or whether a countrywas experiencing fragility. All 24 country offices stated that there are potential challenges to scale-up of UNICEF-supported interventions to address stunting. These challenges are similar to the risks related to sustainability (weak integration into nutrition and health services; unpredictable long-term funding; insufficient governance structures and stability; low governmental prioritization of stunting reduction; resource constraints; and lack of understanding of multisectoral work).

F. Knowledge/data generation, management and use

57. The evaluation found that, at the global level, UNICEF had produced several reports and other documents to generate knowledge and evidence related to stunting. Through these efforts, UNICEF leveraged learning from its nutrition and stunting work in more than 120 countries through the implementation of the Strategic Plan, 2014–2017, which also served as a global knowledge-generation tool. Key documents produced include (but are not limited to) the following: the discussion paper 'UNICEF's approach to scaling up nutrition for mothers and their children'; the publication *Improving Child Nutrition: The achievable imperative for global progress*; and the *Annual Results Reports* on nutrition.

58. Improved data and knowledge are key to addressing child stunting and UNICEF has demonstrated a commitment to knowledge, evidence and data generation and use at all levels. The evaluation documented examples of significant contributions made by UNICEF in supporting data-generation activities, which often provided the most up-to-date information on key nutrition indicators.

59. The evaluation also found examples of UNICEF innovations in data-collection methodologies, such as use of mobile and cloud-based technologies and sampling designs to quickly and efficiently identify priority target areas. UNICEF also made significant progress

in knowledge generation, including through mapping exercises to obtain a clear picture of the existing methods, roles and responsibilities, strengths, gaps and bottlenecks; studies aimed at understanding country-specific causes of malnutrition and documenting inequities; and economic and financial analyses.

60. The knowledge generated has been used to establish the evidence base for advocacy and policy, to determine additional data needs, and to develop country-specific strategies to address stunting. This was generally very much appreciated by external stakeholders. In addition, the publication of UNICEF research in several peer-reviewed publications is indicative of the quality of the organization's research.

61. Nonetheless, in many countries insufficient data and knowledge remain a constraint to more effective advocacy and programming for the reduction of stunting. The amount and quality of data often fall short of requirements, especially in terms of disaggregation at subnational levels and for specific vulnerable populations. Some gaps in indicators in country planning documents, especially as relates to measuring progress in equity, are likely related to the fact that the data necessary to track these indicators are not available, or at least not available with sufficient frequency to facilitate a meaningful measurement of progress.

62. There are also clear differences among countries in terms of the volume and types of knowledge generated. Even in countries that generated a significant body of knowledge, evaluations and research into the effectiveness of specific approaches and interventions were limited during the evaluation period. Continued work by UNICEF in closing the gaps in data and knowledge generation is important, given the progress to date and a strong sentiment from external stakeholders that UNICEF plays a significant role in making advances in this area.

G. Efficiency of management and operations

Financing

63. The evaluation found that nutrition accounted for approximately one tenth of the UNICEF budget for 2014–2017[11] ($1,708 million). UNICEF nutrition expenditures increased 25 per cent, from $484.2 million in 2014 to $603.5 million in 2015.[12] In both years, these amounts represented approximately 13 per cent of total spending. An analysis of regional data for 2014 and 2015 shows the largest nutrition allocations in sub-Saharan Africa: the West and Central Africa and Eastern and Southern Africa regions. During the two-year period, the largest increases were observed for the Europe and Central Asia region, followed by the Eastern and Southern Africa, Middle East and North Africa, and South Asia regions, while the East Asia and the Pacific region had a 15 per cent decrease in nutrition expenditure.

64. Evidence suggests that UNICEF programmes use resources efficiently through targeted use of funds (e.g., a focus on specific geographic areas). However, a detailed allocation analysis was not possible because resources are not specially earmarked for stunting. The lack of stunting-specific budgets/financial information is likely to present challenges in assessments related to cost-effectiveness and country planning. The lack of reporting on some

[11] Stunting-specific financial information was not available. In addition, the evaluation analysed only nutrition budget and expenditure information as it was not possible to isolate expenditures that might have been relevant for stunting under nutrition-sensitive sectors. The evaluation did examine funding in other sectors (e.g., water, sanitation and hygiene) that may have shared joint programming with nutrition.

[12] These amounts include UNICEF headquarters funding.

core indicators might affect the capacity of UNICEF to attract funds for stunting-reduction activities.

65. In countries experiencing budget shortfalls, underfunding affected essential activities in all areas supporting stunting reduction (nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive areas, coordination, governance, monitoring and evaluation). In several countries, by focusing on particular geographic areas or populations with a higher prevalence of stunting, UNICEF could more efficiently allocate limited funds.

Human resources and internal coordination

66. Most nutrition programmes are sufficiently staffed. The evaluation found that most countries made progress in integrating staff from sectors other than nutrition into their stunting-reduction efforts across a range of activities. Such collaborations helped to ensure multisectoral approaches to reducing stunting among children.

67. However, a lack of internal processes and incentives to operationalize and successfully implement integration sometimes hinders these efforts. In addition, although evaluation shows some evidence of progress in nutrition-sensitive areas, progress is not widespread. This result suggests that challenges in internal coordination may adversely affect UNICEF contributions to stunting reduction.

Coordination at headquarters and regional offices

68. The evaluation assessed support provided by headquarters and regional offices, and coordination between country offices and UNICEF headquarters and regional offices. Regional offices and headquarters support of country programme efforts to address stunting varied widely across and within regions from 2014 to 2017. In all but the Latin America and Caribbean Regional Office, the regional office was as or more likely than headquarters to provide direct support. Only three countries: the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Ghana and Yemen, received support from headquarters without also receiving regional office support.

69. Countries received support in resource mobilization and funding coordination, bottleneck analysis, knowledge generation and dissemination, preparation of guidance documents, organization of regional meetings and workshops, and collaboration across countries (including shared evidence and South-South collaboration).

70. While human resources at the regional level are inadequate to effect substantial improvements at the country level, regional offices play an increasing role in supporting country office efforts to address stunting, and in coordinating activities among countries within and across regions. Additional support is warranted, especially in the areas of cross-country and cross-regional sharing of information and resources, modelling collaborative behaviour across sectors, and more systematic guidance on multisectoral approaches to address stunting. Closer collaboration with other United Nations entities may be necessary to improve coordination at both regional and global levels.

71. The most frequently reported challenges for cross-sectoral involvement include the following:

(a) Limited guidance and leadership;

(b) Lack of joint planning, accountability and supervision across sectors; and

(c) Siloed sections.

72. Country offices reported that the regional offices could do more. In many instances, the support received in one country – e.g. evidence generation, technical support and sharing of

best practices across countries – is needed by another country in the same region. Three common themes emerged across regions: (1) regional coordination with other United Nations entities would help to eliminate overlaps and ensure assistance when needed at the global level; (2) the need for continued sharing of evidence, tools and information across countries in a region; and (3) the availability of more guidance, technical support and training on planning, partnering and developing nutrition-sensitive strategies. Other suggestions include additional linkages to global knowledge and developments at headquarters, and improved fundraising assistance (including in emergency contexts).

IV. Conclusions

73. The evaluation was conducted during a transitional period when the global community was gradually shifting its focus from efforts to reduce the number of children who are underweight to those aimed at reducing the number of children who are stunted. In most countries, UNICEF has only prioritized stunting since 2016, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The conclusions outlined in the evaluation report distil the evidence in accordance with the evaluation questions and are presented in a formative manner. The recommendations are forward-looking, and aim to further consolidate ongoing work by UNICEF and its partners to address stunting in a systematic manner.

Relevance, appropriateness and coherence

74. The evaluation found that UNICEF global strategies to reduce stunting are coherent and largely aligned with global goals, priorities and initiatives, such as the SUN Movement and the 2014 Rome Declaration on Nutrition and Framework for Action. This demonstrates an understanding by UNICEF of the important role of an enabling environment in improved and equitable use of nutritional support and services, improved nutrition and care practices, and the use of defined outputs and output indicators. The discussion paper 'UNICEF's approach to scaling up nutrition for mothers and their children' provides a framework and approaches for stunting-reduction activities. However, the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2014–2017 does not reflect these approaches in a manner that clearly promotes coordination across sectors for the reduction of stunting. At the regional level, stunting reduction is included as a regional priority or programmatic focus area, although, with the exception of the Regional Office for South Asia, stunting-specific plans or commitments are not clearly defined in regional documents. At the country level, country programmes are aligned to country contexts as presented in situational analyses and with the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2014–2017 outputs relevant to stunting. However, deliberate planning to address stunting as an outcome is lacking across the global, regional and country levels, although improvements were introduced during the evaluation period. This is primarily because the country programmes of cooperation with national Governments reflect government priorities, which, from 2010 to 2015, were aligned with Millennium Development Goals, which focused on reducing underweight among children.

Leadership and partnerships

75. The evaluation found clear evidence of relevant leadership activities undertaken by UNICEF and of the significance placed by the organization on strengthening strategic partnerships and alliances at the global, regional and country levels. Key factors that determined success include technical expertise and recognized credibility in the areas of children and nutrition. Generally, stakeholders are likely to view UNICEF as a leader in bringing nutrition issues to the forefront and often mention the SUN Movement as a valuable mechanism through which stunting can be addressed. However, leadership and advocacy related to stunting-reduction efforts vary considerably across regions and countries, and there

are indications that a lack of cohesion and coordination exists within the United Nations system and within UNICEF. In addition, UNICEF is sometimes viewed as reluctant to engage with non-United Nations stakeholders and to involve them in areas related to children and nutrition.

Effectiveness

76. During the evaluation period, 21 of the 24 countries included in the evaluation reported progress in reducing stunting, while 3 reported that the rates of stunting had worsened. UNICEF country programmes provide multiple examples of successful advocacy and progress towards achieving relevant results, such as improving policy frameworks; increasing government commitment to address stunting; building capacities at national, subnational and front-line worker levels, and addressing the needs of children and women affected by humanitarian situations.

77. The evaluation documented a growing focus on multisectoral approaches and support of nutrition-sensitive interventions, although clear examples of implementing these multisectoral approaches as part of the country programme approaches to stunting reduction are found in only half the countries assessed. Gaps and challenges remain. Inadequate political commitment and capacities represent a challenge in most countries and are most evident in the fragile countries included in the evaluation, where UNICEF may need to concentrate on more downstream approaches to meet immediate needs.

Equity and reach of disadvantaged children

78. Most UNICEF country offices identified specific vulnerable populations in their country programme and planning documents. Children living in poverty were the most commonly specified category. Of the 24 sample countries, only 7 country offices included nutrition indicators disaggregated for the identified vulnerable population or populations. The most commonly documented successes related to data generation and community-based interventions. However, most country offices report challenges in addressing the needs of disadvantaged and vulnerable children.

79. The main challenges are inadequate systems and a lack of coordination; lack of government commitment; and lack of infrastructure, resulting in difficulties reaching specific vulnerable populations. In addition, there is a need to disaggregate data to identify vulnerable populations, measure results and progress, and ensure equitable approaches to stunting reduction.

Sustainability and scale-up

80. The evaluation found that the global initiatives led and supported by UNICEF are likely to be sustained due to partner commitment and a strong global focus on nutrition. At the country level, sustainability of technical and institutional considerations is integrated in the design of UNICEF country programme. The findings indicate that dialogue has begun with national Governments related to funding allocations for scale-up of interventions to prevent stunting.

81. However, risks to sustainability and scale-up of efforts to address stunting exist across all countries. Key risks include general resource constraints; funding unpredictability; suboptimal government commitment and instability; and limited infrastructure and capacity.

Knowledge and data generation, management and use

82. UNICEF demonstrates a commitment to knowledge, evidence and data generation and use at the global, regional and country levels. The evaluation documented examples of significant contributions made by UNICEF in supporting data-generation activities that often

provided the most up-to-date information on key nutrition indicators. UNICEF also made significant progress in knowledge generation, including through mapping exercises to obtain a clear picture of the existing methods, roles and responsibilities, strengths, gaps and bottlenecks; studies aimed at understanding country-specific causes of malnutrition and documenting inequities; and economic and financial analyses.

83. Nonetheless, knowledge generation remains a barrier to stunting reduction. Fewer than half of the countries reported that data related to stunting outcomes and outputs are sufficient to meet the country's needs. There is a need for evidence providing proof of the interventions that are most effective at reducing stunting in different contexts.

Efficiency of management and operations

84. Evidence suggests that, despite low levels of global funding for nutrition, UNICEF nutrition programmes achieve efficiencies through the targeted use of funds. Stunting-specific budget and financial information will be important to document the cost-effectiveness of interventions as well as for country planning purposes.

85. The regional offices play an increasing role in supporting country office efforts to address stunting. All but three countries have made some progress in integrating staff from sections other than nutrition in their efforts to address stunting across a range of activities, and have embraced the notion of such collaborations. However, these efforts are hindered by the lack of internal processes and incentives to operationalize and successfully implement such coordination. Closer collaboration with other United Nations entities at both the global and regional levels may be necessary to avoid overlaps and address gaps.

Evaluation limitations

86. Several factors constrained the evaluation design options and the ability of the evaluation team to fully address the evaluation questions and produce the clearest and most accurate findings.

(a) Although systematic efforts were made to ensure robust country selection to represent as many country contexts as possible, the global and regional findings may be influenced by the specific countries included in the evaluation. In addition, the evaluation aimed to assess efforts to reduce stunting between 2010 and 2015, but the country plans and the development of global guidance for stunting prevention did not fully align with this time period. Thus, in some cases, the evaluation assessed more than one country programme, and, where applicable, weighted recent country programme findings more heavily.

(b) Lack of counterfactual information did not allow attribution of the UNICEF contribution to any observed changes in stunting reduction. Such analysis was outside the scope of the evaluation.

(c) The available documents included a mix of self-reported and independent reports. However, these documents were complemented by additional independent sources of information collected by the evaluation team.

V. Recommendations and management response

87. The summary and conclusions presented in various chapters of the evaluation report include examples of work that provides learning opportunities, as well as challenges and concerns that need to be addressed to further strengthen efforts to address stunting by UNICEF and its partners. The recommendations constitute key actions that need to be undertaken by the organization to move the stunting agenda forward, especially in light of

the stunting-reduction targets included in the World Health Assembly Global Nutrition Targets and the Sustainable Development Goals. The recommendations are as follows:

88. Building on the document, 'UNICEF's approach to scaling up nutrition for mothers and their children', formulate a more concrete UNICEF strategy for maternal and child nutrition (2030) that aligns closely with the narrative, goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda, to eliminate stunting and all forms of malnutrition (New York headquarters).

89. Define and articulate approaches in the next Strategic Plan, 2018–2021[13] that enable the UNICEF Nutrition Section, Programme Division to convene cross-sectoral coordination for the reduction of stunting with agreed-upon roles and contributions (New York headquarters).

90. Promote and support concrete processes that help to clarify the roles and responsibilities of strategic partners within and outside the United Nations, especially in the areas of nutrition-sensitive programming and multisectoral approaches to reduce stunting (New York headquarters, regional and country offices).

91. Develop and promote a theory of change and guidance that informs stunting-reduction strategies in regions and countries with a high prevalence of stunting. Such strategies should operationalize context-specific, multisectoral approaches with strategic sectors and partners (New York headquarters, regional and country offices).

92. Include a deliberate focus on stunting reduction in global, regional and country plans for nutrition through the inclusion of nutrition-specific interventions, nutrition-sensitive approaches, stunting-specific indicators and strategic multisectoral approaches (New York headquarters, regional and country offices).

93. Assess capacity gaps and needs in countries where stunting prevalence is high. Mobilize partners and leverage the niche of UNICEF in the area of upstream work to further expand/diversify capacity-building activities (country offices).

94. Include concrete and detailed equity-focused approaches in the context of policy, strategy and programme actions for the reduction of stunting, with reference to specific approaches, targets and indicators for the reduction of stunting among the most vulnerable children (regional and country offices).

95. Invest more systematically in improving knowledge generation about the determinants of stunting and the interventions that are most effective in reducing stunting in different contexts. Use this knowledge as the evidence base for advocacy, resource mobilization and programme planning (New York headquarters, regional and country offices).

96. Improve documentation and sharing of evidence, data, information, tools, good practices, and lessons for advocacy, policy development, strategy design, programme scale-up and knowledge generation, across countries in a region and across different regions (New York headquarters and regional offices).

97. Incorporate accountability across sections to improve collaboration and cooperation towards better results orientation to reducing stunting and use it as the basis in assessing the achievement of country programme targets (country offices).

98. Leverage resources and expertise in tracking country financial resources for nutrition to improve availability of reliable country budget data and facilitate dialogue with national Governments related to funding allocations for stunting reduction (country offices).

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[13] The UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 was approved by the Executive Board at its 2017 second regular session.

United Nations E/ICEF/2018/17

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
13 April 2018

Original: English

For decision

United Nations Children's Fund
Executive Board
Annual session 2018
11–14 June 2018
Item 8 of the provisional agenda*

Management response to the UNICEF evaluation report

Evaluation of UNICEF strategies and programmes to reduce stunting in children under 5 years of age

Summary

UNICEF welcomes the first comprehensive evaluation of the organization's strategies and programme performance to reduce stunting in young children. Stunting in early childhood is a major concern because of its links to increased mortality and morbidity, the irreversible loss of cognitive development – especially when stunting is severe – the implications for school readiness in early childhood, reduced productivity and wages in adulthood, and losses in human capital and national income.

Overall, UNICEF concurs with the evaluation process and methods, the adequacy of the evidence collected, and the findings and recommendations. The evaluation highlights four main recommendations that have been fully embraced in the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, and are summarized here: (1) To formulate the UNICEF strategy on maternal and child nutrition from now until 2030, building on the 2015 document 'UNICEF's approach to scaling up nutrition for mothers and their children', to align with the Sustainable Development Goal targets for nutrition, and to ensure the articulation of nutrition-specific programming and nutrition-sensitive, cross-sectoral approaches; (2) To include a deliberate focus on stunting reduction in relevant global, regional and country plans for nutrition, including the establishment of a global-regional-country compact to accelerate progress in countries with high burdens of stunting; (3) To develop and roll-out a knowledge-generation and dissemination plan to support UNICEF programming for the prevention of stunting and other forms of malnutrition in all contexts. This plan will document and/or share evidence, data, information, tools, good practices and lessons for policy development, programme design and scale-up, advocacy and knowledge generation, across countries and regions; and (4) To ensure continued intersectoral coordination within and outside UNICEF, and inter-agency coordination through the United Nations in the areas of nutrition-sensitive programming and multisectoral approaches to reduce stunting and other forms of malnutrition in all programme contexts.

* E/ICEF/2018/8.

Note: The present document was processed in its entirety by UNICEF.

18-07387 (E) 110518

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Key evaluation recommendations and UNICEF management response

Action	*Responsible section/s*	*Expected completion date*	*Actions taken and implementation stage: Not started Under way Completed Cancelled*	*Supporting documents*
Evaluation recommendation 1: Building on the document, 'UNICEF's Approach to Scaling up Nutrition', formulate a more concrete UNICEF Strategy for Maternal and Child Nutrition (2030) that aligns closely with the narrative, goals and targets of the Sustainable Development Agenda to eliminate stunting and all forms of malnutrition (New York HQ). **Management response: Agree**				
Action 1 The Nutrition Section, Programme Division (PD) will lead the formulation of the UNICEF strategy for maternal and child nutrition, to prevent stunting and other forms of malnutrition in all programming contexts. The strategy will build on the document entitled 'UNICEF's approach to scaling up nutrition for mothers and their children'; align with the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 and the Sustainable Development Goals; and will outline how UNICEF will contribute to accelerate nutrition results in countries with a high burden (i.e. absolute number and/or proportion) of children who suffer from stunting or other forms of malnutrition.	Nutrition Section-PD	2018 Q4	Under way Nutrition Section-PD has included this action in its 2018 workplan. The first planning meeting took place on 9 February 2018 and a timeline is being drafted for development, review and endorsement of the strategy.	UNICEF's approach to scaling up nutrition for mothers and their children[1]
Evaluation recommendation 2: Define and articulate approaches in the next Strategic Plan (2018–2021) that enable the UNICEF Nutrition Section/Programme to convene cross-sectoral coordination for the reduction of stunting with agreed-upon roles and contributions (New York HQ). **Management response: Agree**				
Action 2 UNICEF will ensure that the Strategic Plan,	PD	2018 Q4	Under way	UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021[2]

[1] Available from: www.unicef.org/nutrition/files/Unicef_Nutrition_Strategy.pdf.

[2] Available from: www.unicef.org/about/execboard/files/2017-17-Rev1-Strategic_Plan_2018-2021-ODS-EN.pdf.

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2018–2021 enables cross-sectoral approaches for the reduction of stunting and other forms of malnutrition, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals.			UNICEF has ensured that its Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 includes Goal Area 1: Every child survives and thrives, which brings together health, nutrition, HIV/AIDS, and early childhood development (ECD) and includes an output relating to the prevention of stunting and other forms of malnutrition and a target to reach 250 million children with services for the prevention of stunting and other forms of malnutrition annually by 2021. It also includes strategies such as "programming for at-scale results for children", which promotes cross-sectoral work to achieve results for children, including the prevention of child stunting. In addition, cross-sectoral work on community-systems for survival, growth and development (PD Health, Nutrition and ECD Sections), food systems and children (Nutrition Section, Private Fundraising and Partnerships Division, and Office of Research-Innocenti), nutrition of school-age children (PD Nutrition and Education Sections) and nutrition of adolescents and young people (PD Nutrition, Gender, and Adolescent Development and Participation Sections) are under way to prevent stunting and other forms of malnutrition in the children of this generation, while breaking the intergenerational cycle of stunting and malnutrition.	

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Evaluation recommendation 3: Promote and support concrete processes that help clarify roles and responsibilities of strategic partners within and outside the United Nations, especially in the areas of nutrition-sensitive programming and multi-sectoral approaches to reduce stunting (New York HQ, regional and country levels). **Management response: Agree**				
Action 3 **3.1** Nutrition Section-PD will provide technical and programmatic support to the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Lead Group (SUN Movement Lead Group), the SUN Movement secretariat, and SUN Movement networks at global, regional and country levels.	Nutrition Section-PD	2018 Q4	Under way Nutrition Section-PD provided technical and programmatic support to the SUN Movement Lead Group meeting in September 2017, for the Group's annual meeting that was chaired by the UNICEF Executive Director. Strategic support at global, regional and country levels was also provided for the successful organization of the 2017 SUN Movement Global Gathering in Côte d'Ivoire in November 2017. This engagement will continue in 2018.	http://scalingupnutrition.org/
3.2 The Nutrition Section-PD will promote and support biannual inter-agency coordination meetings between the five United Nations organizations working in nutrition and food security (the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the World Food Programme (WFP), the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF, and will support the development of joint situation analyses on food and nutrition security.	Nutrition Section-PD	2018 Q4	Under way Nutrition Section-PD co-led the first annual coordination meeting between the five United Nations organizations working in nutrition and food security (FAO, IFAD, WFP, WHO and UNICEF) in March 2018.	
Evaluation recommendation 4: Develop and promote [a] theory of change and guidance that informs stunting-reduction strategies in regions and countries where the prevalence of stunting is high. Strategies should operationalize context-specific, multi-sectoral approaches with strategic sectors and partners (New York HQ, regional and country levels). **Management response: Agree**				

Action	*Responsible section's*	*Expected completion date*	*Actions taken and implementation stage: Not started Under way Completed Cancelled*	*Supporting documents*
Action 4 Nutrition Section-PD will develop and use a theory of change that guides programmes and approaches to reduce stunting and other forms of malnutrition in regions and countries where the prevalence/burden is high, while highlighting the specific contribution by UNICEF to the overall theory of change, in line with Sustainable Development Goals and the UNICEF strategy for maternal and child nutrition.	Nutrition Section-PD	2018 Q4	Not yet started Nutrition Section-PD has included this activity in its 2018 workplan and will start work in April 2018 as part of the development of the UNICEF strategy for maternal and child nutrition.	
Evaluation recommendation 5: Include a deliberate focus on stunting reduction in global, regional and country plans for nutrition through the inclusion of nutrition-specific interventions, nutrition-sensitive approaches, stunting-specific indicators and strategic multi-sectoral approaches (New York HQ, regional and country levels). **Management response: Agree**				
Action 5 **5.1** Nutrition Section-PD will develop, in consultation with 4 regional offices and 10 country offices in Africa and Asia, a plan of action for the prevention of stunting in the 10 countries that account for around 70 per cent of stunted children globally (i.e., more than 100 million children).	Nutrition Section-PD	2018 Q4	Not yet started The Global Nutrition Network Meeting took place in October 2017 and convened the 10 countries that account for an estimated 70 per cent of stunted children globally and their respective regional offices. Headquarters (HQ), regional offices (ROs) and country offices (COs) agreed on a joint plan of action to address stunting. A draft matrix of commitments and results was compiled. These activities have been included in the 2018 workplans of the relevant COs, ROs and Nutrition Section-PD.	

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5.2 Nutrition co-leads efforts to confirm the inclusion of stunting-reduction goals and targets in UNICEF regional headline results/priorities in the four regions with the largest burden of stunting among children – East Asia and the Pacific; Eastern and Southern Africa; South Asia; and West and Central Africa.	Nutrition Section-PD	2018 Q4	Under way Nutrition Section-PD, with the Regional Nutrition Advisers, has successfully advocated for the inclusion of stunting-reduction goals and targets in UNICEF regional headline results/priorities in the four regions with the largest burden of stunting.	
Evaluation recommendation 6: Assess capacity gaps and needs in countries where stunting prevalence is high. Mobilize partners and leverage UNICEF's niche in the area of upstream work to further expand/diversify capacity-building activities (country level). **Management response: Agree**				
Action 6 Nutrition Section-PD will support capacity gap analysis in the 10 countries with the highest burden of child stunting, with a focus on community-based delivery of essential nutrition interventions through systems strengthening. This analysis will inform and shape acceleration strategies for the prevention of stunting in high-burden areas.	Nutrition Section-PD	2018 Q4	Not yet started Nutrition Section-PD has included this activity in the section's 2018 workplan as part of a larger Goal Area 1 capacity gap analysis of community platforms for child survival, growth and development outcomes.	
Evaluation recommendation 7: Include concrete and detailed equity-focused approaches in the context of policy, strategy and programme actions for the reduction of stunting, with reference to specific approaches, targets and indicators for the reduction of stunting among the most vulnerable children (regional and country levels). **Management response: Agree**				
Action 7 Nutrition Section-PD will identify the approaches required to reach the most vulnerable children, as part of a capacity gap analysis of community-based delivery of	Nutrition Section-PD	2018 Q4	Not yet started Nutrition Section-PD has included this activity in its 2018 workplan.	

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essential nutrition interventions for the prevention of stunting.				
Evaluation recommendation 8: Invest more systematically in improving knowledge generation about the determinants of stunting and the interventions that are more effective in reducing stunting in different contexts. Use this knowledge as the evidence-base for advocacy, resource mobilization and programme planning (New York HQ, regional and country levels). **Management response: Agree**				
Action 8 **8.1** Nutrition Section-PD will create, in line with the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, a new programme unit on knowledge and partnerships for nutrition, with efforts made to have dedicated staff funded by regular resources.	Nutrition Section-PD	2018 Q2	Ongoing As of 1 January 2018, a new programme area on knowledge and partnerships for nutrition was created, with a programme unit comprising four posts: a specialist focusing on evidence generation and knowledge management (funded by regular resources); a second specialist focusing on partnerships, monitoring and evaluation (funded by other resources); a third specialist focusing on communications and advocacy (funded by other resources); and a GS-5 programme assistant (funded by regular resources). A primary focus of the new programme unit is to improve documentation and sharing of evidence, data, information, tools, good practices and lessons for advocacy, policy development, strategy design, programme scale-up and knowledge across the countries in a region and across different regions.	
8.2 Nutrition Section-PD will develop and roll-out a knowledge generation and dissemination	Nutrition Section-PD	2018 Q2	Under way	

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plan in support of UNICEF programming for the prevention of stunting and other forms of malnutrition in all programming contexts.			A knowledge generation and dissemination plan has been developed and was shared with Regional Advisers at the Global Nutrition Network Meeting in October 2017. The draft plan, incorporating relevant feedback, was finalized in December 2017 and its implementation started in the first quarter of 2018.	
8.3 Nutrition Section-PD will finalize and disseminate a series of analyses on the determinants of stunting and other forms of malnutrition in South Asia, which is home to 40 per cent of the world's stunted children.	Nutrition Section-PD	2018 Q2	Under way Analyses on the determinants of stunting and other forms of malnutrition in South Asia is under way and will be completed by 30 June 2018. It will be disseminated in September 2018 in the form of publication in a special issue of the international journal *Maternal* and *Child Nutrition*.	
Evaluation recommendation 9: Improve documentation and sharing of evidence, data, information, tools, good practices, and lessons for advocacy, policy development, strategy design, programme scale-up and knowledge generation, across countries in a region and across different regions (New York HQ and regional levels). **Management response: Agree**				
Action 9 **9.1** As mentioned above, the Nutrition Section-PD will create, in line with the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, a new programme unit on knowledge and partnerships for nutrition, with efforts made to have dedicated staff funded by regular resources.	Nutrition Section-PD	2018 Q2	Ongoing As of 1 January 2018, a new programme area on knowledge and partnerships for nutrition was created, with a programme unit comprising four posts: a specialist focusing on evidence generation and knowledge management (funded by	UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021[3]

[3] Ibid.

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			regular resources); a second specialist focusing on partnerships, monitoring and evaluation (funded by other resources); a third specialist focusing on communications and advocacy (funded by other resources); and a GS-5 programme assistant (funded by regular resources). A primary focus of the new programme unit is to improve documentation and sharing of evidence, data, information, tools, good practices and lessons for advocacy, policy development, strategy design, programme scale-up and knowledge across the countries in a region and across different regions.	
9.2 To develop and roll-out a knowledge generation and dissemination plan in support of UNICEF programming for the prevention of stunting and other forms of malnutrition in all programming contexts. This plan will document and/or share evidence, data, information, tools, good practices and lessons for policy development, programme design and scale-up, advocacy and knowledge generation, across countries and regions.	Nutrition Section-PD	2018 Q2	Under way A knowledge generation and dissemination plan has been developed and was shared with Regional Advisers at the Global Nutrition Network Meeting in October 2017. The draft plan, incorporating relevant feedback, was finalized in December 2018 and its implementation started in the first quarter of 2018.	
Evaluation recommendation 10: Incorporate accountability across sections to improve collaboration and cooperation towards better results orientation to reducing stunting and use them as the basis in assessing the achievement of country programme targets (country level). **Management response: Agree**				

Action	*Responsible section's*	*Expected completion date*	*Actions taken and implementation stage:* *Not started* *Under way* *Completed* *Cancelled*	*Supporting documents*
Action 10 UNICEF will implement in its Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 approaches that enable the Nutrition Section to convene cross-sectoral coordination for the reduction of stunting and other forms of malnutrition in all programming contexts, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals and the UNICEF strategy for maternal and child nutrition.	PD	2018 Q4	Under way UNICEF has ensured that its Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 includes Goal Area 1: Every child survives and thrives, which brings together health, nutrition, HIV/AIDS and ECD, and includes an output relating to the prevention of stunting and other forms of malnutrition and a target to reach 250 million children with services for the prevention of stunting and other forms of malnutrition annually by 2021. It also includes strategies such as "programming for at-scale results for children", which promotes cross-sectoral work to achieve results for children, including the prevention of child stunting. In addition, cross-sectoral work on community-systems for survival, growth and development (PD Health, Nutrition and ECD Sections), food systems and children (PD Nutrition Section, Private Fundraising and Partnerships Division, Office of Research-Innocenti), nutrition of school-age children (Nutrition and Education Sections) and nutrition of adolescents and young people (PD Nutrition, Gender, and Adolescent Development and Participation Sections) are under way to prevent stunting and other forms of malnutrition in the children of this	UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021[4]

[4] Ibid.

Action	*Responsible section s*	*Expected completion date*	*Actions taken and implementation stage: Not started Under way Completed Cancelled*	*Supporting documents*
			generation, while breaking the intergenerational cycle of stunting and malnutrition.	
Evaluation recommendation 11: Leverage resources and expertise in tracking country financial resources for nutrition to improve availability of reliable country budget data and facilitate dialogue with national governments related to funding allocations for stunting reduction (country level). **Management response: Agree**				
Action 11 Nutrition Section-PD will collaborate with the Social Inclusion and Policy Section-PD, the SUN Movement secretariat, the World Bank and/or other partners in supporting countries to track national financial resources and budgets for nutrition and stunting reduction.	Nutrition Section-PD	2018 Q4	Not yet started This activity has not started but plans are under way with Social Inclusion and Policy-PD to support countries that become eligible for funding from the Power of Nutrition partnership to track their national financial resources and nutrition budgets through public expenditure reviews and related approaches.	